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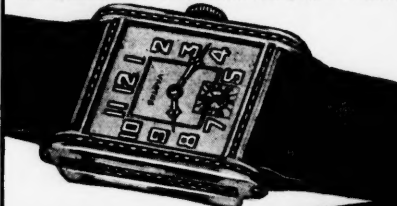
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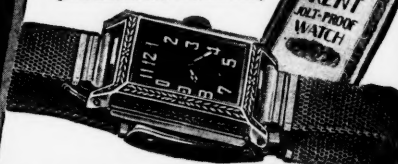
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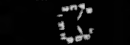


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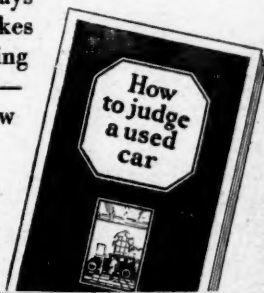
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## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

By Fred A. Walker

### *Killing an Idea*

THE hardest thing in the world to kill is an idea.

You can destroy the man who has it; you can reduce his brain to dust and his body to ashes, but his idea, if it is a right idea, will live on and thrive despite your efforts.

The crucifixion did not kill the idea of Christianity.

The burning of Joan of Arc did not wipe out the truths for which she stood.

John Brown's idea did not die with him on the scaffold.

The threats of the greatest powers in the world, while they made Galileo deny with his voice the truth of his theory that the earth revolved around the sun, did not change or kill his idea, for under his breath he whispered, "*E pur si muove*" ("It does move, though").

On the other hand, a wrong idea is sure to die.

Nothing is eternal except the truth.

The false premise destroys both argument and conclusion. The false idea eventually kills itself. All error is self-destructive.

There is a right and a wrong way to kill a bad idea. The wrong way is to kill the possessor. The right way is to prove the idea itself is wrong, and then it dies of itself.

Witchcraft was not obliterated by the burnings of Salem. It was wiped out by the proving of the truth that there is no such thing as a witch.

The decadence of monarchies has not resulted from the beheading of kings nor the imprisonment of princes. It is the result of proving to the people that there is a better, more just, and more useful kind of government than the rule of a sovereign.

All the blood shed by the guillotine did not so much as dampen the idea of French revolution. It lived because it was right.

When you encounter a wrong idea in some one else or in yourself, combat it with reason, with logic, with common sense. Treat it not as if it had no right to exist, but balance it with truth and the right will win.

The greatest support that wrong ideas have ever had was violence.

Normally man wants to see everything and everybody have a fair chance, a square deal, an opportunity. The surest way to give a wrong idea added support is to treat it unfairly.

Give the right half a chance and it will annihilate wrong and wipe error out of existence. It is stronger than iron bars. It is more potent than the scaffold. It is the only thing with which to fight and win.

# Blood and Iron

*A serial—Part I—Life is raw  
in the gold-mining town where  
Walt Devon is beset by deadly,  
unknown enemies*

By Max Brand

Author of "The Untamed," "The Night  
Horseman," etc.



## CHAPTER I

### THE DEATH SIGNAL



ALL the dark length of the rear veranda of the Palace was spotted with the glow of pipes or the pulsing red points of cigarettes.

Walter Devon looked with pleasure upon this trembling pattern of lights, for he knew that only dwellers in the wilderness enjoy a smoke in the dark—hunters and trappers, say, whose only rest comes after nightfall, or cow-punchers who toast their noses on winter nights.

There was no hunting in West London, he knew, except for gold, and there was no trapping except of greenhorns and tenderfeet and fools in general, whose pelts were lifted painlessly every day; but whatever their occupation at the moment, these were men of the desert, of the mountains.

His pocket filled with hot fumes, and suddenly he realized the shot he fired was a blank

There was another breed inside, already swarming back to the gaming tables, or lining the bar; sometimes the veranda floor shivered a little with their stamping, and the air trembled with their shouts; but up and down the veranda there was never an alteration in the tone of the deep, quiet voices, speaking guardedly as though of secrets.

Now and again one of the smokers finished and went inside, and as the door opened, the droning voice of a croupier floated out.

Walter Devon listened, and sighing with content, he drew in a longer breath flavored with the fragrance of



many tobaccos and the pure sweetness of the pines. He was in no hurry to go back to work, with his hands resting on the green felt; he had not even picked his game for the night!

So he dwelt with aimless pleasure upon the glow of pipes and the glimpses they gave him of mustaches, and of young straight noses, and of noses thin and crooked with age; or again he considered what the cigarettes showed him when, for an instant, they made a pair of eyes look out from the night.



These lights were capable of movements, the pipes stirring slowly, the cigarettes jerking rapidly up and down as the smokers gesticulated. By sheer chance, since he had turned his attention to the subject, he saw—or thought he saw—a cigarette at the far end of the veranda wigwag, in dots and dashes clearly made, a question mark!

Walter Devon smiled at such a coincidence of gestures and unconscious ideas, and he continued to look dreamily at the distant smoker when, quickly and neatly, he saw that gleaming little point of light spell out: "Four!"

Once could be accident; the second time could not. Devon knew that the smoker was signaling the length of the veranda to some other man. And yet it seemed very strange that signals should be necessary when ten steps would take the signaler to the other end of the porch!

Devon left his chair and went to the side of the veranda. Over the railing he glanced down the steep sides of the gulch, covered by the ragged shadows of the pines, and in the bottom the stars found the water in an open pool show-

ing a tarnished face of silver. Opposite the Palace, Timbal Mountain stepped grandly up the sky.

"Kind of like ridin' on the observation platform, eh?" said one who lounged near by, against the railing.

It was, Devon agreed, turning a little toward the speaker. In this manner he faced away from the signaler whom he first had spotted, and immediately, at the farther end of the porch, he saw the duller glow of a pipe spell in the air the same question mark which he had noticed before!

The heart of Devon stirred in him. There were times when he told himself that he roamed the world seeking his fortune, whether it should be found



in war, or cards, or a lucky marriage; but he knew in his heart that all he wanted was the excitement of adventure.

In the thirty-odd years of his life while he had grown lean and hard with many labors, no gold had stuck to his fingers except a few thousand dollars to make him feel comfortable in a poker game of any size; but though he had won no money, he had found again and again the electric spark which leaped now in his brain as he observed this little mystery on the veranda of the Palace.

It would not be altogether safe, perhaps, to attempt to observe both of these signalers, though unless he watched the two of them he was not apt to make much from their strange and silent conversation. It was not safe, because the two men themselves dared not leave their chairs and speak together! They must be under observation of the closest kind, and they spoke by this code only in the faith that the observers would not understand what they said.

What were they saying, who were they, and who was keeping them under watch? These were small questions, perhaps, and had little to do with Walter Devon, but at least the solution would fill him with pleasure.

In the meantime he had to arrange some method of keeping his eye upon the first signaler as well as the second, but this was done by taking a little pocket mirror into the palm of his hand. The signals of Number One streaked in dim red flashes across the small surface; Number Two he was facing while he talked to the man at the railing.

"Like an observation platform," he agreed, "except that the mountains don't close up behind us."

"They ain't likely to close up," said the stranger. "They're more likely to spread apart, what with the gougin' and washin' and blastin' they're doin' on the side of old Timbal."

Across the face of the mirror streaked the signal: "*One way only!*"

Before him there was no answering movement of the lighted pipe, as Devon answered his new companion: "It was not like this when I was last here."

"You know the lay of the land in the old days?"

"Yes."

"So do I. Twenty year back I forked a mule and rode down Timbal's face. He didn't wear a name, then. I come to the river. It didn't wear no name, neither."

"Speaking of names, how did the town pick up this one?"

"Why, that's a yarn," said the other in his deep, soft voice, so guarded that it barely reached the ear of Devon. "Old Les Burchard come along here—but that was ten years ago!"

"It's fifteen since I was here before."

"Well, Burchard come along with eight mules haulin' at his wagon. He was aimin' at Farralone, and he'd took this here valley for a short cut. Les had a barrel of white-faced poison in his wagon; when he got to Farralone he aimed to mix it up with tan bark and prune juice and call it whisky, but he thought that he'd better sample it on the way to see it wasn't gettin' bad.

"He took a taste, but he was kind of doubtful. He tasted agin, and still he wasn't plumb clear about it. He didn't finish tastin' until his wagon come along to this place, and by that time he'd tasted himself nearly blind and run the right fore wheel of his wagon off of the bluff. It pretty near turned the outfit over and smashed the wheel to bits on a rock. Les sat down and looked things over. He could pack part of his truck along on the mules, of course, but he didn't have no proper packsaddles, and so Les Burchard says to himself that if he can't get to a town, a town 'll have to get to him!"

The narrator paused, chuckling softly, and now a match flared as Number Two lighted his pipe. Devon clearly

saw a young, handsome face, and a good, square-tipped jaw such as a fighter is apt to wear. It pleased him, that face, and he registered it clearly, feature by feature, in his memory.

For there are ways and ways of looking at a human face, and the poorest way of all is to depend upon a mere ensemble effect; the best is to dwell on details which cannot be altered by fictitious scars that pucker the skin, or changes of expression, or a growth of beard. The silhouette of the nose will alter very little. The angle of the nose bridge and the forehead is another thing, and the height and spread of the cheek bones, and the ear, above all, if the memory be very photographic indeed!

It was so with Devon, and he told himself that he would know this man to the very end of time!

His companion was continuing the story softly:

"Right there, Les Burchard he spread out his stuff, and he built himself a log shack, and he stowed things away, and he waited for a town to come and catch him!

"Back yonder behind Timbal was a man run some cows on the hills. By name of Devon, he was. Les went over and sold him a couple of his mules, and then he went back and waited a while more. He had a gun; and the valley had game; and he lived prime for a couple of months on venison and that white-faced poison of his.

"When he was feelin' pretty groggy one mornin', he got up and found the valley soaked and blind with a fog. Burchard had been a sailor, and that fog reminded him of London harbor up the Thames. So he stuck out a sign that afternoon, and on the sign was 'London.' He'd found a name for his new town, you understand?

"But after a while it seemed to Burchard that London wasn't quite enough, because folks might get it mixed up with that other old town that most people have heard about now and

then. So the next day he wrote 'West' in front of London, and that's how this joint come to be known as West London."

Number Two's pipe suddenly moved in wigwag:

"*What way?*"

And the rapid cigarette point, blown upon until it glowed orange-red, made answer in the mirror:

"*Death!*"

The narrator went on:

"Les Burchard had not been in the valley long before that greaser that Devon kicked off of his place picked up the chunk of ore in the valley and guessed what he'd got. He hit town a week later, and th' next mornin' Les woke up and heard single-jacks chattering away at the rocks; and ten days later there was five thousand men laborin' in the gulch. Les, he ladled out eggshells of his white death at a dollar a taste. He sold the timber of his wagon for two thousand dollars in gold. His mules, they brung in a coupla hundred apiece, and the leather of the harness was pretty near worth its weight in gold. Les, he made enough money out of that lay to pretty near retire on, but of course he didn't. One day, when the valley was all filled with gents, Les, he was full of something better than sunshine, the last of his barrel, and he mooched off down the gulch and says to himself that he'll try his luck at diggin' gold."

Number Two, who had made a pause as though the last word startled him, as well it might, now signaled: "*When?*"

"*To-night,*" answered the cigarette smoker.

"*Where?*"

"*Purley's at eleven.*"

"Old Les Burchard," said the narrator, "was so full of redevye that he didn't know where he was. But he had along a pick and shovel that was the last of his wagonload of stuff. When he got down into the valley he seen where a flat face of rock had been

blasted out and hollowed away pretty deep, where some gents had sunk a shaft, or started to, but the vein had pinched out on 'em. Old Les, he says: 'Here's a hole part way dug already. It's sure saved me a lot of work.'

"He stepped in there and he started pickin' away, and some of the boys in the other holes around, they come and laughed to see him bendin' the point of his pick ag'in' a solid wall of rock where there wasn't any sign of color. They laughed, and waited for him to work himself sober and see what a fool he'd been. But pretty soon he hauls off and says: 'One last lick for luck!' and he soaks in the short end of his pick and breaks out a chunk, and the inside of that chunk was fair burnished and shining with pure wire gold! It sure dazzled the eyes of the boys, and it made Les Burchard so rich that he didn't know what to do with his coin.

"However, storekeepin' and such always was his line, and so, in spite of his money, he come up here where his wagon had broke down, and he built this here Palace, and I gotta say that he found a good set of dealers to put behind his tables, but the best of all is the cook that he found. That Chink can certainly talk with a fryin' pan!"

Walter Devon heard and murmured interest, but his heart was elsewhere, for "Purley's" was the name of the boarding house where he lived!

## CHAPTER II

### THE ZERO HOUR



HERE were no more signals; presently the whole body of people on the veranda began to move back into the gaming house, and they went in such confusion that he, drifting with the rest, lost sight of signaler Number One. Number Two he spotted bucking faro with a rich stack of chips, and Devon put some coins on roulette at the nearest table.

Number Two was a half-breed, he decided, for there was the smoke in the eyes and the highness of cheek bones; he played like an Indian, also, with perfect indifference, no matter how much he lost, no matter how much he won. Faro and roulette were to Devon the drunkard's games. They required nothing but luck, and nobody but a fool really could expect to beat them.

When he felt that he had observed the stranger long enough, Devon left shortly after ten and went to Mrs. Purley's house. It was the largest boarding house in West London. Mr. Purley had established it as a saloon and gambling place, but the roulette wheels failed to make money fast enough, so he made a little home improvement in them so that he could collect faster. Unfortunately, a curious cow-puncher took one of the machines apart one day, and afterward he shot Mr. Purley twice through the head.

The big saloon stood vacant; Mr. Purley's debts slightly exceeded his credits; and the saloon was about to be taken over by the first bidder, when Mrs. Purley arrived from the East.

She kicked the auction and the auctioneer into the street, closed the house again, scrubbed it from top to bottom, split the big rooms into little ones with canvas partitions, hung up hammocks for beds, and straightway opened to an enormous business. She herself stood behind the bar, and twice she was known to have felled turbulent bullies with a stout beer bottle and then to have dragged them into the street.

To this house went Walter Devon, and found Mrs. Purley herself in the "library." Thrice a day it served as a dining room; the rest of the time it was open to loungers, but this evening there was not a soul in it other than the landlady.

"You have a quiet house, Mrs. Purley," Devon remarked in appreciation.

"It is quiet," said she. "It's quiet from top to bottom. There ain't a note

of music in it, not even the poppin' of a few bottles of beer; there is no sound of drunks turnin' out their pockets full of gold. All these big-hearted Western miners do for me is to flop on their bunks and snore from midnight to mornin'. I would rather be an organ grinder on Third Avenue than Queen of the May in a dead town like this joint!"

"It's a token of their respect for you, Mrs. Purley," her lodger commented. "They don't—"

"It's a token of the heads that I've cracked," said the gentle lady, "which ain't a thing to the ones that I'm goin' to bust. But I dunno how it is. The boys around this neck of the woods don't seem to know how to absorb their bottles and go to sleep without goin' through a screechin' stage like a pack of howlin' hyenas. I ain't gunna have it. These cheap sports, the minute they got a jolt of whisky inside of them, they gotta sprain their larynxes tellin' the world about it. I ain't gunna furnish a free hall for that kind of song and dance. The next yahoo that opens his trap on high C, I'm gunna bust him for a home run."

She dropped her formidable fist upon the long table, and it quaked throughout its length.

"Have a drink with me," invited Devon.

"I don't mind if I do," said Mrs. Purley, "if I can pry that ham of a bartender out of his sleep."

"Maybe he works long hours."

"Him? He don't do nothing except wash up his place before the boys go to work."

"That's about daybreak?" suggested Devon.

"What of it? Then all he's gotta do is to stand behind his nice cool bar all day long and serve out drinks. I give him a hand myself when the crush starts. Would I ask an easier job than runnin' that bar all by myself? I wouldn't, but the boys don't feel like drinkin' too free when there's a lady

around. It sort of cramps their style, I've always noticed. I mean except a real gentleman like you, Mr. Devon, which is a pleasure to have you around, I gotta say!"

The bartender was, in fact, soundly snoring. Mrs. Purley roused him with a whack of her broad hand, and he placed foaming glasses of beer before them.

"There ain't so much in it for the house," Mrs. Purley explained, "and the turnover of beer ain't so quick, but it's more genteel, that's what I mean to say. Here's lookin' in your eye, Mr. Devon, and may she always be good to you! Say, Bill, sweep the cobwebs out of your eye, will you, and look like you hoped to see us agin!"

She said to Devon: "You ain't gunna dip into this minin' game, are you?"

"I've never dug deeper than the spots on a pack of cards," he explained.

"That's the only business," sighed Mrs. Purley. "Look what an ass Jim was when he had everything goin' good; he had to switch off and doctor the luck he was havin'. The world with a fence around it wasn't good enough for Jim, but he had to have it set in platinum, the big sap."

A chair scraped in the "library." Glancing through the door, Devon saw the handsome face of Number Two, as he settled down to the table with a newspaper spread before him.

"Who is that?" Devon asked.

"That's Grierson," said Mrs. Purley.

"A fine-looking fellow!" said Devon.

"Him? For a picture he is! I tell you what kind he is; in the Bowery it's so thick with them that they squash under foot. What's the name of them white flowers that turn yellow and rotten when you handle 'em? He's a white camelia, he is. And under the pit of his arm he's got a thorn that 'll repeat six times. Look at those long fingers! He never did no honest stroke,



I'll tell a man! Pretty kids like him is what has brought down the price of murder in Manhattan to fifty bucks a throw; and a dray horse costs as much as a bank president. So long, Mr. Devon; it's been a real pleasure to have this little chat with you. If anybody disturbs you in my house, you let me know and I'll spread 'em out as thin as gold leaf. *Good night!*"

Mrs. Purley disappeared with a long stride. Devon, strolling into the library, found for himself another paper not more than a month old, and tried to bring himself to a state of interest in the "news." He glanced at his watch. It was a quarter before eleven, and if all went as scheduled, Mr. Murderer Grierson should be at work in this house within fifteen minutes. Quietly Devon promised himself that he would not be far away when the crisis came!

"Gotta match?" asked Grierson.

He passed the box across the table. Grierson thanked him from around a cigarette; plainly he wanted to talk.

He said: "Is that a straight game of faro they got at the Palace?"

"I've never bucked it," Devon replied.

"Take it from me, and don't," snarled handsome young Grierson. "It's the limit, the raw deal that they give you there!"

"Ah?"

"Sure. I never seen nothin' like it. One of these days some hard-boiled bird is gunna cop the box and look at the inside of it. I come pretty near doin' it myself, but, aw, what's the good?"

"To show up a crooked game? A great deal of good, I should say."

"Should you?" yawned Grierson.

"Aw, I dunno. You take the way a guy's money floats away, it don't make so much difference. Most usually the ponies get my wad, and I dunno that faro has anything on the ponies. Whacha think?"

Devon merely nodded as the other

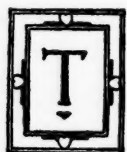
man rattled on. It was only five minutes before the hour. Perhaps he could keep the killer engaged for the extra moments.

In the distance a clock began to chime with an impatient rapidity, and Grierson's talk died away as he listened. Yet he made no offer to move from his chair, but looked with a curious intensity into Devon's face.

And suddenly the latter understood. *The killing was truly determined for eleven o'clock, and he, for mysterious reasons, was to be the victim!*

### CHAPTER III

#### A CONFESSION



HAT hurrying toll of the clock had reached nine when Devon ventured a hasty glance over his shoulder which told him, he thought, that a shadowy form moved past the open screen door behind him.

He looked back toward young Grierson, ready for trouble, and trouble was there. The shoulder of that worthy young man was hunched and his right hand flung back for the draw when Devon fired.

The draw was a matter which never bothered him greatly, for the simple reason that, in such affairs as this, he never pulled a weapon. He carried in his coat pocket a single shot pistol with a stub nose, so that it was easily accommodated and made no bulge at all—or at least nothing to speak of. But it fired a forty-five caliber slug with enough force to knock a man down at close range, and that was, after all, what a full-sized Colt accomplished.

It took a great deal of practice to handle the weapon with any accuracy, but such encounters as need surprise attacks are usually almost body to body. So he dropped his hand into his pocket, pulled the trigger, and stepped back a little, to await the fall of young

Grierson with a bullet hole torn through his stomach.

But Grierson did not fall. The pocket of Walter Devon filled with hot fumes, and suddenly he realized that the shot he fired was a blank!

Grierson, with an oath, had snatched at his own gun, and his face wrinkled with disgust as the gun hung. He jerked again, and there was a loud tearing of cloth, while Devon saw the big revolver swing clear.

He had three choices. He could race for the door, plunge under the table, or drive straight at the gunman. Devon took the third choice, because both of the others invited a bullet in the back; and a natural left hook which had helped him through his school days lodged accurately on the side of Grierson's chin.

It had an effect almost as potent as a large caliber bullet. As the knees of Grierson buckled and his eyes turned blank, Devon received the gun from the numbed fingers of the killer with one hand, and with the other he eased the youngster into a chair.

Over the head of Grierson he stared at the screen door, but no form stirred there. He glanced down and spun the cylinder of the Colt. There was no doubt about the reality of the bullets which filled that gun; there was no doubt, either, as to the reality of the murder plot which had been formed against him, or the cunning of the rascals who had picked the charge from his gun before he engaged.

The voice of Mrs. Purley was heard in the distance. She came bulging suddenly through a doorway, thrusting a pair of sleepy, yawning men before her.

"If you call yourselves men, you hulking calves," said Mrs. Purley, "step out and do something. There's murder around here—I heard a gun—hey, what? Mr. Devon, or I'm a liar!"

Devon stood behind the chair of Grierson and passed the Colt into his pocket. It was very much more bulky,

but his grip was comfortably on its handle, and he pressed the muzzle against the back of the man's neck.

"I was talking to Grierson," he explained, "and while I was talking, I tried to demonstrate a little gun of mine. The trigger has a very light pull; I'm sorry for the noise!"

"Is that all?" the widow inquired. "Young man, you look as if you'd had a hole poked through your gizzard. Are you all right?"

"Me?" Grierson said faintly. "Sure, I'm all right. What should be wrong with me?"

"Go back to bed," Mrs. Purley ordered her two champions, and they sleepily obeyed. She confronted Devon, arms akimbo, saying:

"I dunno what the game is, Mr. Devon, but there ain't any shootin' allowed in this house. You mind what I say. I like you fine, but there's nothing like a couple of killin's to give a place a bad name!"

And with this mild admonition, she disappeared.

Grierson slowly rose from the chair and found the muzzle of his own gun lodged in the pit of his stomach; he raised his hands with a groan.

"What's the main idea?" said Grierson. "I got no more poison aboard. But where did you get that hook? I thought I'd ducked it when it jumped down and nicked me. Ain't I seen you work in the ring, Slim?"

Devon "fanned" his man with care. There was, in fact, no other sign of a weapon than a slingshot secured to the wrist of Grierson with an elastic band, so that it could be shaken down into the tips of his fingers at the first emergency. He took the slingshot as well, though Grierson protested.

"What's a little thing like that in this alley?" Grierson asked sadly.

"It's better with me," said Devon. "I don't like to make you feel lonesome, Grierson, but I think this will just fit into my pocket."

And he took the other into the farthest corner of the room, where neither door nor window looked in upon them. There he sat him down and stood Grierson before him, his shoulders against the wall.

"Grierson," he began, "I never saw you before to-night."

"No," said Grierson, "I don't suppose you did."

"Somebody put you onto this job?"

The boy was silent, looking at the floor, his handsome face sullen and dejected.

"There are two ways of handling this job," Devon continued. "One is to turn you over to the sheriff. That would land you in a jail where the walls are not very thick. The other way is to march you down town and make a little speech in any saloon, telling them just what has been done to me up here."

"Try it!" said Grierson defiantly. "There ain't a thing you can prove!"

"Powder burns on the inside of my pocket, and yet no hole punched through the cloth. I'd call that sufficient proof that my gun had had its teeth pulled before you came here to murder me, my friend. People in this part of the world don't mind a gunfight, now and then, as long as it's fair. But they hate dirty murder. I know exactly how they feel, because I'm a Westerner myself. And if I tell them what I have to say, they'll believe me, young fellow, and they'll take you out and hang you to a high tree."

During this quiet talk, Grierson gradually had been losing color. Now he fumbled at the back of a chair and finally slumped into it. He kept passing his fingers over the bruised place on his jaw, looking more and more blankly.

"I dunno how it happened," said Grierson finally, more to himself than to his companion. "The old gun sort of hitched onto my trousers. My God, it never done that before!"

Then his fury blazed, wide-awake.

"You'd be clean in hell, by now, if you hadn't had all the luck!"

"I believe you," said Devon. "Now, Grierson, I'm sorry about this. It's a sad thing that your luck ran out on you, and your trousers were torn, and all of that; but there's only one thing I want out of you, and that's the name of the man who hired you for this piece of work."

"Nobody hired me," Grierson snarled.

"Is that final?"

"It is, and you be damned!"

"Stand up, then," said Devon, "and walk ahead of me; I'm going to take you down town, my friend, and tell some of the boys exactly what you've done."

"I'm not gunna move," Grierson declared with a sort of childish stubbornness.

But Devon smiled, and suddenly the boy leaped to his feet.

"My God," said he. "You'd—you'd murder me and never care!"

"It isn't murder to brush your kind out of the way," he was assured by Devon. "It's simply an act of public spirit—like seeing that the streets are clean, Grierson! Mind you, you have my word for it. If you'll tell me the truth, you're free."

Grierson raised his hand, slowly—for fear the gesture might be misinterpreted—and loosened his collar. Once more he stared upon the floor, and there is no better way for a man to lose his nerve.

"Whachawant?" he asked huskily.

"The name of the man who handled my gun, in the first place."

"I dunno," said Grierson. "He's got twenty workin' for him that could do that trick right under your eyes, and you'd never know—not even a smart guy like you!" the killer finished, some of his usual sneer returning.

"I'll even drop that," said Devon. "But who hired you?"

Grierson blinked.

"He'd find me if I fly like a snipe



and dodge all the way around the world!" he communed with himself.

"It's better to fly like a snipe," Devon retorted, "than to hang by the neck. What do you think?"

Grierson moistened his lips. His shifting eyes flashed upon his captor.

"They'd do it," said he. "My God, I seen them take out a Mexican last week and string him up. They—they didn't think nothin' of murderin' a guy like that! It was soup for them!"

He shrugged his shoulders; then his whole body shuddered.

"Look here," he exclaimed suddenly, "you think that you wanta know. You don't want to know at all. If you know, you'll know that *you're* in the soup, a lot worse than I'll ever be!"

"I've taken chances all my life," said Devon, "and this will be only one more."

Grierson closed his eyes, set his teeth, and then he exploded:

"Take it, then! It's the big guy—it's the main squeeze himself!"

"What main squeeze?"

"Why, who do I mean but the main squeeze of this joint? It's the old fat guy himself!"

He was hardly more than whispering this, his eyes bulging.

"I'm still in the dark," said Devon.

The other made a gesture of the most intense disgust. Then he drew nearer, crouched and tense. As he spoke his face was as that of one who shouted against a great wind, but only a faint whisper came to Devon.

"Burchard!"

#### CHAPTER IV

##### A GAMBLER SHOWS HIS HAND

"**B**URCHARD? The man who owns the gambling house—the Palace? Is that the fellow you mean?"

Grierson glared on each side of him as though tigers were stalking him.

"Put it in the papers, why don't you?" he snarled. "Hell, is it gunna do anything but get you bumped off all the quicker if you go shoutin' it all over town?"

"Burchard? Burchard?" said Devon. "By Heavens, it's not possible. I've never laid eyes on him in my life."

"That's a lie," answered the gunman, fiercely. "He wanted to buy your land, and you wouldn't sell!"

"I wouldn't sell? To Burchard? He never approached me for it. No one but Williams—"

"Why, Clancy Williams is always nothin' but Burchard's goat!" the other assured him.

"Williams? Does he belong to Burchard?"

"I've said my piece, and I ain't gunna say another word," was the reply. "If it don't suit you—why, break your word, and take me down the line!"

"Very well," said Devon. "You've told me what I asked to know. Good night, Grierson! I'll keep this on deposit—until to-morrow, say!"

He smiled genially and touched the revolver, while Grierson stood up and walked slowly from the room, pausing once or twice with tightly gripped hands, as though on the verge of whirling about and throwing himself at his conqueror. Then, with a heave of his shoulders, he jerked open the door and was gone.

Devon went up to his bed, locked his door, placed upon his window sill a row of little tin tacks, point up, and then turned in and slept like a sailor, dreamlessly and deep.

In the morning he had an appointment to meet Clancy Williams at the "Two Angels" at ten o'clock, but between the end of his breakfast and that hour he had time on his hands. He employed it by strapping a spring holster under the pit of his left arm; into that holster he fitted a long-nosed Colt and then walked into the woods, for practice—a very odd practice, which consisted of sudden snap shots to right

and to left, at blazes on trees, and at stumps and stones. He scored his share of misses, his share of hits.

"I'm slow as a fat old dog," said Walter Devon, "and I'm walking through a fog!"

Before he went back to town, he paused on the edge of the woods. Even at this hour the nearer face of Timbal Mountain was tangled with threads of blue mist, but the lower summits on either side let the full light of the morning into the valley.

West London seemed to him like a dream that might blow away with the morning mist from the face of Mount Timbal. For his memory of the valley as it had been before this long street sprawled on the hill, before those gashes were cut among the rocks, was very clear.

And again, for the thousandth time, he asked himself what could make Burchard so desperately eager to get his land that even a small delay about the purchase had determined the saloon owner and miner on murder. However, since he could not conceive a possible answer, he resolutely put the thing behind him and went down to the Two Angels.

In the bar he found Clancy Williams, long and lean, with a downward look and wolfish grin. He walked up and said, without preliminary:

"I understand that you buy for Burchard, Williams. Is that correct?"

Mr. Williams parted his lips to answer, and then seemed to change his mind. He stared at Devon, agape. Then:

"No matter who I buy for, I offered you a price, and I have the money here for you. Is that good enough?"

"And I've drawn up the papers here and have them all ready to sign—the deed and all, Williams."

"Well," said Williams, pacified, "that's better. Sounded like you were trying to make a point of trouble. I'm glad you didn't. Glad for your sake, young man. It's the last time in your

life that you'll have fifteen thousand offered for such land as that!"

"A fine, handsome tract, though," Devon commented. "Nearly a thousand acres of beautiful grazing land, Williams!"

"Beautiful?" Williams retorted sourly. "It burns the backs off the cows in the summer, and freezes their horns off in the winter."

"Aye," said Devon; "but when West London spreads out there around the shoulder of Mount Timbal, you'll be selling building lots at—"

"Mr. Devon," Williams asked coldly, "are you joshing me, by any chance? D'you realize you could lay down Chicago between here and your land?"

"However," said Devon, "I don't think fifteen thousand is a great deal for it."

"I don't suppose you do," Williams replied in his dry manner; "but it's all that you'll get out of me for it. You can take it or leave it, young man, and good luck to you!"

"Well," said Devon, "I'll tell you frankly that everything is arranged."

He took the papers from an inside coat pocket and spread them on the bar.

"It's all in perfect order," said he, "and a signature will make it right."

"Very well, then," Williams agreed, "let's have the signature and finish it up. I've other work on my hands today!"

"This work won't take you long," said Devon gently.

He gathered up the papers and ripped them lengthwise, and then across. After this he threw them into a corner.

"What sort of a bluff is this?" asked Williams, his temper rising rapidly. "What sort of deal are you trying? Do you think you can buck up the price on me by any of these stage tricks and dodges? Not by a damned sight, young fellow!"

"Go back to your employer," said

Devon, "and tell him what I've done."

All heads were raised in that crowded barroom by this time, and wide eyes stared at them. It was what Devon desired, and he failed to lower his voice.

"I'll tell him that he wanted me to do business with a fool!" Clancy Williams howled, balling his huge fists.

Devon smiled upon him, and suddenly Clancy Williams began to blink his eyes and claw backward along the bar, as though he had seen a snake.

"Tell Burchard," said Devon, "that I'm going to call on him in person before the day is much older, and tell him, besides, that if I should disappear suddenly, the town of West London will have a great many questions to ask him about my disappearance! Do you understand?"

Clancy Williams gave him one last, wolfish, sidelong glance, and then glided through the side door of the saloon, and was gone. If there were any victory achieved, it was on the side of Devon, but he was not so sure. It depended on how this odd game should be played, and so far he was not at all sure of the fall of the cards.

## CHAPTER V

### A TIP FROM THE SHERIFF



NE thing Devon greatly regretted, and that was the attention which he had been obliged to attract in this affair, for in his business nothing was so profitable as obscurity, and nothing reduced his profits more and increased his hazards to a larger degree than to be pointed out as a celebrity.

However, this was rather a different matter. And he had two potent reasons for wishing to call the public attention upon him. The one was that it would guard his back, so to speak; the second was that even a man as powerful as Burchard might be stopped if he knew that public attention had

been called down upon him.

After the leaving of Clancy Williams, there was more than one wistful eye fixed upon him, but Devon did not talk to them, for he understood that the less he said the more confidence the people would have in him. He set up a round of drinks, and left at once with his own scarcely tasted.

His next visit took him to the office of the sheriff.

Sheriff Naxon had as an office a little shack removed to a small distance from the street. There his wife kept house for him, and there his two gangling sons were growing up, lank and lean as their father, with the same sad faces and pale, uncertain eyes.

Sheriff Naxon, on this day, sat upon the rail of his little corral and observed a horse inside it. When he spied Devon, he nodded with the Westerner's casual courtesy.

Said the sheriff: "Would you look over that hoss, stranger?"

Devon rested his elbows on the top rail. It was a pot-bellied horse that he was asked to criticize, a lump-headed, thin-necked creature.

"He has legs," said Devon non-committally.

"Four of 'em," agreed the sad-faced sheriff. "But what kind, would you say?"

"I can't tell the bone," Devon responded. "There's too much hair on 'em."

"Aye," said the sheriff. "That's what I say myself. What would you say about a lot of hair on the legs of a hoss?"

"I don't know. Warm in winter, I suppose."

"Aye, I suppose it is."

The sheriff resumed his thoughtful whittling at a stick of soft white pine.

"That hoss there," he said, "is one of the out-beatin'est hosses that ever you seen."

"Is he?"

"He is. But what I can't make out, is he really a hoss?"

"I don't think he's a mule," Devon remarked, ready to smile. "Not by his ears."

"But he's got a mouse-colored muzzle, like a mule," said the sheriff, "and they *has* been short-eared mules, for all of that!"

"I suppose there have been."

"Which if you was to see him in the hills, you'd think he was a goat."

"He's sure-footed, is he?"

"He ain't nothin' but sure-footed. If I was to ride him on that picket fence, he might bust the pickets, but he'd never fall down!"

"Ah!" said Devon politely.

"Walkin' a ledge on the side of a cliff is his idea of a cheerful ride," the sheriff continued, "and slidin' down a bluff a hundred yards deep is the only thing that gets his ears at all forward."

"Aye, but those are grand qualities."

"They are."

"He can run, I suppose? Every mustang can."

"He can't run much," said the sheriff. "He ain't got much speed, but when he gets into his best clip he can hold it all day long. He thinks he's a dog-gone buzzard floatin' in the air, and if you ride him upstairs or down, it don't make no difference. Not to Monty!"

"Are you selling him?" asked Devon.

The sheriff looked at the visitor earnestly.

"Would you be wantin' a hoss?"

"Not that kind," Devon responded.

"I mean," he corrected himself, "I already have a horse that will do me fairly well. But are you selling that one?"

The sheriff sighed and closed his eyes.

"Three times," said he, "I've worked myself up to the point of sellin' that hoss, and three times I have lost my nerve, because they ain't anybody I hate that bad."

"And what's wrong with him?"

"Kinks," said the sheriff. "He is full of kinks. You couldn't iron 'em out straight any more'n you could iron the curl out of a darky's hair, I'm gunna swear."

"He takes a little to pitching in the morning, I suppose," said Devon, "but then, a lot of good ponies have to be warmed up."

"It ain't the time that matters to him," the sheriff explained. "Any time, mostly, will suit him pretty good. But it's the place that matters the most with him. If he's on a ledge where he can't put down more'n two feet at a time, that's the ledge he picks out for a cakewalk. And if you get him on the top of a bank with a sixty-mile-a-minute toboggan comin' ahead of you, that's the place where he shines at sun-fishin'. Because he thinks that he's a bird, and when he comes to one of them places, he shows you how plumb nacheral he feels walkin' the air."

The sheriff sighed and shook his head with bitterness.

"I have growed gray since I owned this hoss," he said.

"How long have you had him?" Devon asked.

"Nigh onto twelve year."

Devon swallowed a smile.

"And he never gets used to you—or you to him?"

"We don't fit," said Naxon dismally. "We don't get on together. We ain't got the same tastes. It ain't that he's ever let me down, and they ain't a crook in the world that can get loose when Monty has pointed his nose at the tail of that crook's hoss. That other hoss has gotta come back, and I don't care what his breedin' might be. Spanish flier or English thoroughbred, that hoss has gotta come back to Monty before the end of the day, because upstairs and downstairs, he flies it just the same. But him and me, we ain't suited. We ain't—what they say in the divorce courts, which I forget the word. And that's why I'm always



askin' would maybe somebody want to buy this old hoss?"

"Some horse thief or rustler would, of course," Devon replied. "They need that kind to get them over the country."

"I would aim to find that there rustler or hoss thief," the sheriff said mournfully. "I wouldn't sell this

never would mind me droppin' in to have a chat with him."

"I've never laid eyes on him," Devon admitted. "Is he the sort of fellow who *would* be out to kill, sheriff? Can you tell me that?"

"Why, sir," said the sheriff, "I jest



hoss to him. I would make him a present of Monty and I wouldn't never wish him in jail, because the sufferin' that he would do on the back of Monty would sure be enough! Might you of come over to jest take a picture of him, maybe?" asked the gentle Naxon.

"I came over about something else," Devon confessed. "I came over to tell you that I think Burchard is trying to get my scalp, sheriff."

He waited for this bomb to take effect, but the sheriff only nodded and smiled as though he had been expecting such a remark—as though he had long suspected such things of the founder of West London.

"The point is," Devon added, "if anything happens, I'd like to have it known that Burchard is the man to call upon."

"Sure," said the sheriff, "I've knowed him for a long time, and he

nacherally can't. The fact is, I could pick out a yegg, or a pickpocket, or a second-story gent, or a hoss thief, even, because I've got sort of a run of patterns of 'em in my mind's eye. But murderers are like baseball players. They come fat and thin, tall and short, young and old. You can tell by his looks which gent is likely to steal the bases, and you can't tell by his looks which man is gunna do a murder. So that's a thing I can't help you out on, partner."

"But you know Burchard?"

"Him? Oh, yes! Burchard is by way of bein' my best friend."

"Good. God!" breathed Devon.

"Don't mind me," said the lean, sad sheriff. "Because I ain't nothin' to be considered. I'm only a public servant, hired and paid regular, so my feelin's don't come into any account, thank you!"

"I'm going down to see Burchard now."

"Have you got guns on you?"

"Yes."

"That's right," said Naxon, "because you might need 'em. If you was to drop Burchard, you'd still be likely to have a long way to shoot yourself out of trouble, he's got so many handy gents all around him."

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE LIONS' DEN



HE interview with the sheriff was sufficient to convince Devon that the sheriff was a "character," and also, probably, an honest man, but his experience in the world had been such that he kept his trust in his own pocket until there was only the slightest chance that it was misplaced abroad.

However, the surety with which he had received the information about Burchard from Grierson was now dimmed more than a little. The sheriff had called him his best friend, and if the sheriff were honest, that presupposed a good deal for the keeper of the gaming house.

He went straight to the Palace to have an interview on his own account. Burchard was having breakfast, although it was nearly eleven in the morning. He was done up like a child in a great bib, tucked not only under his chin, but also into the armpits of his vest.

Burchard was like a baby in more than the bib. He was a man of sixty, and his hair had fallen so that on his rosy poll there was only a blond fuzz like that which appears on the head of an infant. His body was as rotund as the body of a baby, and his legs seemed as short, as bowed, as useless; his wrists were mere dimples between the fat of his hands and the fat of his forearms.

Above all, the resemblance was in

his face, which was not seamed by a single line, and was so rosy red that it looked as though the very touch of the air were irritating to this delicate epidermis; at every emotion from laughter to mere thought, his fat cheeks almost shut his eyes from sight, and then it was hard to say whether he was about to weep or to smile, exactly as the eyes of a baby alter.

Burchard had just finished a platter load of chops and went on to several great venison steaks which were carried in steaming by a Chinese waiter, who also uncovered a large wooden board on which were a heap of steaming oven muffins, light as foam and crusted with the most delicate brown.

In ordered attack, the founder of West London advanced into the heart of these viands, and though he never stopped eating, he looked up with a merry smile at Devon, as though inviting him to laugh at such a prodigious appetite, and perhaps envy such copious means of satisfying it.

He said to Devon:

"Sit down, stranger. It's a little early for dinner, maybe, for you—but if you can help me out with these venison steaks, I'd be happy to have you sit here and work alongside of me."

Devon thanked him and explained he already had breakfasted, and would not have lunch for some time.

"Aye, aye," said Burchard, "there's the trouble with the way most folks live. They gotta have a time set aside for everything. A time to go to bed, and a time to get up; a time to work, and a time to eat. Why, it ain't nacheral any way you look at it."

"How should you do?" asked Devon, curious and amused.

The fat man split a hot muffin with his knife, larded it with yellow butter, and established between layers a rich slice of venison, dripping with juice. It made a sandwich so thick that the jaws of Devon ached beholding it. Burchard poised this morsel and smiled; his eyes disappeared; there was

only a smiling mask of the joy of life.

"The time to sleep is when you're tired; the time to play is when you feel dull; work when you have to; and when you're hungry, eat. I've ate six times in a day; and I've had one meal in two. I've smoked ten cigars one after another, and gone a week without tasin' tobacco. And that's why I'm young, partner—so young and tender that the flies like me!"

He laughed. His laughter was curiously soft and restrained, as though he did not wish to shake too violently that large bulk of his. Then his mouth expanded with easy flexibility, and the great sandwich was shorn in twain without effort—without effort the eater masticated this enormous mouthful, and then poured home half a pint of steaming black coffee.

"I don't want to bother you," said Devon, "but if I can interrupt your lunch for five minutes—"

"Don't you do it," Burchard protested. "Don't you interrupt this what you call a lunch. You can talk to me as much as you please, and I'll hear you fine. Eating opens my ears and opens my brains better. I sort of can understand more, partner. So you say right along with what you gotta say, but don't you interrupt my meal!"

Said Devon: "Clancy Williams works for you?"

"Times is he does, times is he don't," the fat man replied, proceeding with his attack on the muffins and venison. "What work might you mean?"

"He was buying my ranch for you—my name is Devon."

"Oh, you're Devon! You're old Jack Devon's son, are you? Now ain't it a funny thing? I recognized something about you when you come in. I says to myself that I'd seen you before. But him that I'd seen was old Jack Devon, dead and gone these years. Hey! But time slides! Yes, Williams was askin' to get the place for me. Here in West London, I got a bit of property, here and there. But

there ain't hardly room for a fat man to spread his elbows in this here town, with it buildin' up so fast. I hankered after a place back in the hills. Old Jack Devon and me used to fry trout over the same fire; so I know all about that place of yours, son!"

Devon nodded.

"The fact is, I've been informed that you wanted that land so badly that when I delayed a while in getting the papers ready, you were willing to have me put out of the way."

"Bumped off, you mean? Rubbed out?" asked the fat man, proceeding without interruption with his meal.

"Aye. Exactly that."

Burchard clucked in disapproval of such a thought.

"Where would you pick up that idea?" he asked.

"It was pointed out to me," said Devon, "with a man-sized Colt, which is a pointer that most people take a careful account of."

"Don't they, though!" agreed Burchard in the most impersonal manner. "I've seen sixteen men in one bar-room with their hands pushed up over their heads, and every one of them sixteen would of swore that the gent behind the Colt was lookin' straight at him!"

He laughed gently.

"And so, to come back to this little affair of mine?" said Devon more firmly.

"Yes, yes, to come back to you, why should I be wantin' to murder you for the sake of your land, son? I don't do murder. I don't have to. If it come to gun plays, there's too much of me to make a handy target."

"That ends it, then," Devon announced. "I didn't want to press any point, but on the other hand, I don't want to hold any erroneous ideas against you."

"Exactly right," said the fat man, "I always want a hoss that does his buckin' in the mornin' and runs straight the rest of the day. Now that



you've come and talked to me, why, it's as though we'd had a good introduction—from your father, say! Now, there's a man that would of laughed if he'd heard such things said about Les Burchard. You might tell me who put such an idea into your head?"

"I can't tell you that."

"And why not?"

"Because if he lied, as I hope he did," said Devon, "a bit of time will show me the truth about what he said. And if he was *not* lying, he'll be murdered for having told."

"Well, well," murmured the fat man, "that's as true as true! But now, who would of thought it out as logical as all of that? Was you raised for the law, maybe?"

And he looked with kindly admiration upon the youth.

Devon stood up and shook his head.

"I was raised for medicine."

"A good trade, a mighty good trade!" said Burchard. "I only been to a doctor once, when my stomach got a mite out of order. What would you think he told me? To eat nothin' for five days! I done it, and it worked. What's more, I've fasted pretty near that long a good many times since, for the sake of the first meal that comes my way afterwards! You gotta go, son? You wouldn't even have a cup of coffee?"

"I have to go," said Devon. "I think we're friends, Burchard?"

"Aye, and your father's friend before you, son."

The hand of the gambler was lost in the soft grip of Burchard, and yet there was strength beneath the thick flesh and in the moist touch.

"Good-by, Burchard."

"So long, doctor."

"Not doctor. I took a crossroads, and wound up dealing cards."

Burchard laughed again until his sides quivered.

"Good luck to your cards, then, except in my house."

"Thanks. And before I go, I must

say that I'll be looking about a bit. If I find anything in what I heard against you, I'll come back and tell you to your face. Is that right?"

"Of course it's right. If you want to put a brand on me, do it in daylight."

He waved his pink hand, and Devon went out from the room. In the outer hall he was aware of two sour-faced Mexicans, one with a scarred face; they sat apart from one another, apart from the world in a mutual bitterness, and for some reason Devon was sure that they were placed here at the beck and call of Burchard.

It made a rather pointed footnote to his conversation with the fat man, and he went out into the blinding white of the sunlight more thoughtful than he had been before.

He went to the livery stable, then, and hired a strong bay gelding for the rest of the day. He was fairly well convinced that Grierson had lied to him, and yet it was difficult for him to leave this unpromising trail. If Grierson had lied, he had done so under peculiarly difficult circumstances, for a pointed revolver is a notable summoner of truth!

So Devon rode out to cut for sign.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEVON SPRINGS A SURPRISE



DEVON rode out of the town on the first valley trail, which dropped with quick turns and sharp angles toward the bottom of the gulch, and into what was now a well of sweltering heat, for the sun was well above the top of even Mount Timbal, and its floods of light were reflected from the walls of polished rock on either side of the gulch. Farther up, beneath the Palace, the slopes were well wooded, but at this point there was nothing to break the furious force of the sun, and the heat was stifling.

Through the thin mountain air, voices shouting, hammer strokes falling on drill heads, floated upward thin as a dream to the rider. Looking down, he could see the color of the river change. Toward the head of the valley it was crystal clear; beneath him it was growing muddy.

Devon came down into the heart of the gorge. Men and their voices and the noise of their work loomed greater here; but above them the mountains rose more gigantic still. He climbed the farther slope, letting the gelding zigzag on the trail, and rapidly the confusion of sounds grew fainter until it was no more than the buzzing of bees.

From the farther ridge he looked back again at the busy gorge, and at the town of West London. Suddenly it was as though he were a boy again, as though he never had left these mountains, but riding out on a morning, he found the great specter of civilization spread out before him.

Then he took the downward slope that led off toward the hills of the ranch.

It was a sheltered stretch between the loftier mountains which had been worn down at this point by a stream that no longer flowed with water. Only when the snows melted, water stood in the old draw, which was now black with willows.

Those spring waters, reënforced by the occasional summer showers, had to supply the ranch for the hot part of the year, and for this purpose sections of the draw were cleared of brush, dammed, and the waters collected in tanks to stand stagnant there for month after weary month.

Devon looked down on them with a slight feeling of disgust as he saw their edges, green with dried slime. It was the tanks which had driven him away in his youth. The mountains were well enough; the solitude could be endured; but the horror of that stale, standing water had gone to his heart and forced

him away against his grim old father's protests.

He saw the ranch house presently, standing in a dell—a naked little shack, with a squat barn, and a few stretches of corral behind it. The trees which might have sheltered and shaded it had been felled to a considerable distance. The unsightly stumps remained.

As he came up, he saw the place as it always had been—the stretch of earth before the door, stamped bare and hard by the hoofs of horses. Against the face of the log cabin leaned a few stretchers on which the hides of coyotes and bobcats were drying.

Now he heard, from the deep distance, a sound like the booming of cannon. In the mines, he could guess, they were firing their shots. It was noon, and the first shift had finished its work.

The long, hollow echoes died faintly in the air as he dismounted and tethered the horse; then he stepped into the doorway and saw Harry and Jim. Through fifty thousand square miles they were known by no other names.

In the grand old days of buffalo and Indians, Jim and Harry had been companions of Jack Devon. The three had hunted, trapped, and traded together. They had fought Indians, taken scalps, ridden through danger of guns and trader whisky, prospected, mined together. When Jack Devon settled on this ranch, it was considered only natural that Harry and Jim should come when they chose and go when they chose.

They used to come down out of the mountains bringing presents of good pelts, or ammunition and guns, to Jack Devon. Or if they came empty-handed, it was no matter. When they arrived, they put their horses into the barn if the weather were bitter winter, or into the pasture if it were mild, and trooped into the house carrying saddles and bridles, which they hung up in the rear wash room. They greeted the

family with a brief "howdy," even if they had been away for half a year, and then they sat down and lighted their pipes.

Devon's mother always grumbled when the pair arrived. They might remain for a day, or for the entire winter, but so long as they were there, they could be counted upon never to lift a hand in chopping wood or caring for horses, or in doing any task about the house. They gave Jack Devon some help with his cows, that was all.

"They think I'm a squaw!" Mrs. Devon used to mutter to her boy.

But once she told him how an outlaw had ridden that way and come into the house with a leveled rifle, and how Harry had thrown the man out, bodily, and then bent the rifle over his knee, and hurled it after the broken criminal.

After Mrs. Devon passed away, they came still more often. Old age was stiffening them; their traps gave smaller yields; and since the death of his father they had remained on the place, taking care of the dwindling herd. The bulk had, before this, been sold to supply the butcher shops of West London.

Now, from the doorway, Devon surveyed them with a twinkle in his eye. Jim, tall, slender, handsome with his long white hair and snowy imperial, was as ever dignified and erect—only slower in his movements, which once had been catlike for speed.

Harry was half a foot shorter than in his prime; his back bent forward from the waist and his great shoulders hung in a heavy stoop. But still there was said to be the strength of two men in his huge old hands.

It was he who worked at the stove, scattering ashes into the air; Jim, with slow dignity, laid out the table, spreading a ragged red cloth. Both of them worked, regardless of the form in the doorway; so much had age filmed their eyes.

A whiff of flying ashes entered the

nose of Jim and he sneezed; the tin cups rattled perilously in his hand.

"If you was in a camp, Harry," said Jim, "the noise you make would scare the game ten mile off. If you was in a boiler factory, the dust you raise would get you fired."

"This ain't an Injun council," declared Harry, "and speeches ain't asked for. Stir up some pone and shut up."

"The pone is stirred and baked," said Jim.

He brought it forth from the cupboard. Heat and age had dried it and warped its stony substance.

"If that's pone," Harry remarked, "you could build a house with some more like it."

"If it's a mite dry," said Jim, "it's better for your stumick. Besides, you got some teeth left, and if you exercise your jaw you won't have to talk so much."

"Hello!" Devon called out.

They turned on him with a start. Instinctively Harry gripped the poker with a force that made the heavy iron bar quiver, and the clawlike hand of Jim snapped down to his gun. Then they saw the face of the visitor and broad smiles instantly appeared.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONFLICTING VIEWPOINTS



THE pair gave Devon a most cheerful welcome. They had seen little of him, and he was far from them in ideas and generation; but he was the son of Jack Devon, and therefore he could do no wrong!

They sat him down in the best chair; they proffered chewing and pipe tobacco; and when he would not have it, they set a third place at the table and the preparations for lunch went on more rapidly.

They laid out broiled rabbit, so tender that the flesh fell away from the

bones; mustard greens gathered on an upland meadow; new-baked corn pone, and wild honey of an exquisite fragrance to eat with it; coffee of a rare brew; and small, sweet melons that grew near the verge of one of the tanks and had been fenced in from the cattle.

These old men, when they chose, had the gracious manners of kindly nobles; they could have put at ease a king or a red Indian; and when they lighted their pipes after the lunch, the old days, glorious with distance in a sort of sunset light, were brought up into that naked little shack.

Then Jim went out to bring in more wood to heat the dish water.

"Jim looks as straight as ever," Devon remarked.

"So does a reed," said Harry, shaking his head. "So does a reed what has lost its pith and is turnin' brown in the fall of the year."

"Why, what do you mean, Harry?"

"I'm feared for Jim," was the reply. "Now's he can't go rampin' and ragin' over the hills like he used to a few year back, they's come a change over him. Seems like he's feelin' his age more'n he should, and I'll tell you the reason why!"

"I'd like to know."

"It's the lack of education, Walt. Dog-gone my hide if it ain't! Books ain't a pile of use when you're livin' on the trail, packin' in the deer meat on your own shoulders of a mornin'. But when you're housed up a lot, especial of a long winter, then is where education comes in pretty handy. Take me now—if the winter begins to pinch, I enjoy a dog-gone lot of readin'."

"What do you read, Harry?"

"I save up the papers mighty careful. I got a whole box full of 'em, over yonder! And in the winter evenings, when I get through cleanin' hides or fleshin' 'em, or whatever there is to do, I turn in and put away a couple of hours and get sleepy. But you take Jim, he ain't got no resource

like that. He's got no good way of puttin' in his time, and it tells on him. He can only make horsehair bridles, and ropes, and things like that. And when he gets tired of it, he's gotta try to tell me the same old yarns that I've listened to time and time agin!"

Jim returned, the water was put on to heat; and then a great bawling began in the corral.

"It's that fool of a jinny," said Harry. "Tryin' to climb into the corral and talk to your hoss. Wait till I lay a length of rail alongside of its fool ribs!"

And away he rushed, bent far over with age, shuffling up the dust.

Old Jim shook his head as he looked after his partner. He said in his deep and gentle voice, into which a slight tremor was just beginning to enter:

"Maybe you've noticed what's happened to pore old Harry?"

"What?" asked Devon.

"The change in him, I mean?"

"I can't see a bit. He's the same old Harry, it seems to me!"

Jim nodded thoughtfully.

"It's not seein' him close, or follerin' him from day to day. You wouldn't notice no change. But me, I notice it! Look at the way he jumped up, just now, and tore out there after a fool of a jinny? Why, I seen the day that a whole dog-gone Cheyenne charge wouldn't of made Harry get up and spoil his after-eatin' pipe. But he's changed. He ain't got no hold on himself!"

"And what's the cause of it, Jim?"

Jim stepped closer and lowered his voice until it was almost inaudible.

"It's the failin' of his teeth. He's still got two that meet, but one of them is beginnin' to wobble, and then I dunno what's gunna happen to pore old Harry. It'll mean watchin' over him like a baby, and mincin' up his food—him that could bite the leg off a buffalo when I knowed him first! Yes, sir, Walt, I can see the time comin', and a mighty miserable time I'm gunna



have of it with Harry when his old age sets in!"

Jim saw something through the rear door that startled him, and running to it, he shouted suddenly:

"Harry, you dog-gone old bow-legged, hobbled-footed igit! Leave that jinny be, will you?"

"I'm gunna larn her some sense!" came the distant bass roar of Harry. "I'm gunna let some light into her!"

"Leave—that—jinny—be!" yelled Jim, and started at a weak run through the door.

Presently the two came back.

"Who owns that jinny?" Jim was heard to ask.

"Dog-gone my heart if I know," said Harry. "Do you?"

"No," said Jim. "I disremember which one of the span it was that was mine; but I'm likely to remember, one of these here days, and if it turns out to be my jinny that you put your time in abusin', they's gunna be a pile of trouble between you and me, young feller!"

They came gloomily back into the house, and found Devon at work at the dish pan.

They paused with mutual exclamations of dismay.

"Look at there!" said Harry. "You gotta go gallivantin' around about a worthless jinny, and Jack Devon's son, he comes out here and he's treated like a damn Injun squaw on account of you!"

For once Jim had no answer. He seized a stained dishcloth and sadly began to dry the tins.

## CHAPTER IX

### A THUNDERBOLT FROM JIM



HEY," muttered Harry, screening his eyes as he stared out the door, "ain't that Steve Maloney comin' over yonder?"

Jim at once stepped to the door and peered.

He said: "Pore old Harry, yore eyes are kind of saggin' and givin' way, it looks like! Can't you see, plain as your own nose, that that's Tucker Vincent's straw boss? That's Way. I can tell him five mile off by the way he slants in the saddle!"

At last the rider swept up before the shack and leaped down from his silver-horned Mexican saddle. He was a lean-faced man of the range, gaudily done up in the style of a Mexican cavalier on holiday, from the gay, short jacket to the bright conchos down the seam of his chaps. He came with jingling spurs into the house, pushing the weight of his lofty sombrero to the back of his head.

"Hello, Harry and Jim." He turned to Devon. "You're Walt Devon, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"My name is Way. I come over to see you for Tucker Vincent."

"I don't know Tucker Vincent."

Mr. Way paused in the midst of his next word, then closed his mouth and opened his eyes.

"You don't know Tucker Vincent?" he ventured at last.

Said Harry: "Walt ain't been back here hardly a week. He don't know much about the people in Timbal Gulch." Then he explained to Devon: "Tucker Vincent hauls out a mule load of gold every day taken from the rocks. He's so rich that he dunno what to do with his coin. Way, here is sort of a straw boss for him."

"I used to work for Vincent back on the Stinson Valley—fifty mile over yonder," said Way.

"I know the Stinson Valley."

"When Burchard made his strike, Vincent was off tryin' to trail rustlers, and he got down this way just in time for the good news. Vincent is a prospector that knows color when he sees it. And what he staked was worth stakin', I can tell you! He's made so much money that I'm to talk to you in a funny way, Devon."

The gambler nodded. Since the sun was westering, they went out before the house and sat down in the shadow. Jim, a lover of horseflesh, went over to stare disapprovingly at the spur marks on the flanks of Way's mustang, and to admire the beauty of the fierce little animal.

"What is it that Vincent's money means to me?" asked Devon. "Unless I could get him to sit down at a poker table with me," he added frankly.

Way grinned—a quick, almost evil flash of mirth.

"That depends on what I can wangle out of him for you," he said.

"Wangle out of him for what?"

"This here place."

"Hey?" exclaimed Harry.

"Yep. This here land," said Way again.

"Jim!" called Harry. "Here's Way, tryin' to buy our place!"

"Hold on," said Jim. "We wouldn't sell, Way. This here is our home."

"It is," agreed Harry, "and we ain't the kind of folks to sell the home off'n our heads!"

"Your home?" sneered Way with sudden malignity. "You two ain't gotta right to a blade of grass that grows on these here hills. When'd you ever take out a homestead, or when did you ever pay down a penny for it, or any parcel of it? And where's your deed to prove on it?"

Harry, having attempted to break in on this fierce speech, once or twice, now said to his companion: "Why, Jim, you come to think of it, Way is right, ain't he?"

Jim scratched his head.

"Of course, the place belongs to Walt," said he. "But we got a claim to it, just the same. It's our home, I reckon?"

"Aye!" said Harry, with dubious enthusiasm. "But how far would that go in law?"

"Not a damn inch," Way assured them.

"It's never coming to the law," said Devon. "Of course they have a right in this place!"

The two old men turned their heads slowly toward him; speech was unnecessary.

"Do I foller this drift?" asked Way slowly. "You give these old gents a claim on your place?"

"I certainly do," said Devon.

"What sort of claim?"

"An equal claim with me."

"Hold on!" Harry gasped.

"You know what you're sayin', do you?" Way inquired, almost bitterly.

"I suppose I do."

"Well," said Way, "you don't—but I'm gunna show you what it would mean!"

"Walt, Walt," protested Jim in his deep, somewhat uncertain voice, "this is a fine thing you're sayin'. But, God A'mighty, what would we lay a claim to, except to layin' our heads under the roof of the cabin, here, so long as you're pleased to have us!"

Devon rested a hand on the thin shoulder of the old man.

"If my father were alive and here," said he, "what would he say? His blood is my blood, Harry and Jim. So—no more talk!"

"There's been too much talk already, as I'm about to prove to you, Devon," said Way. "I come over here from Vincent to buy this place right off of your hands!"

"Hey, will you listen to that?" Harry vociferated. "Vincent wants to buy this place!"

"All right," said Way. "If you got a share in it, an equal share, what sort of a price would you lay onto it? Name it!"

"Lemme see. What would you say, Jim?"

"There's nigh a thousand acres," said Jim.

"What about ten dollars an acre?" said Harry.

"Well," said Devon, "does that suit you, Jim?"

"I ain't sellin'," Jim retorted shortly, "and neither is either of you two." Way turned on him, but checked his words.

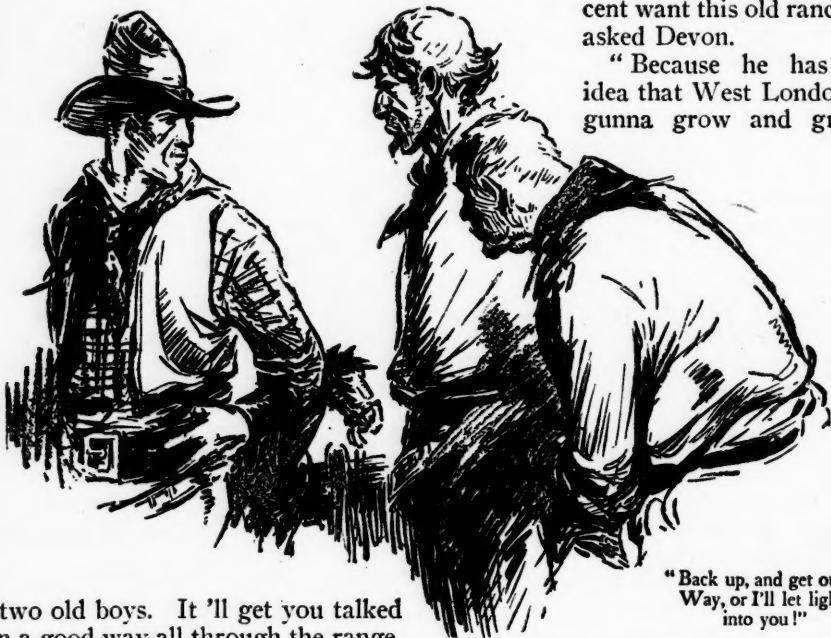
He said to Devon, instead:

"This here is a mighty fine and generous way that you're carryin' on with

"Why not? It ain't such a secret. Vincent has brains, so has Burchard. But chiefly, them two love to beat out each other at the same jobs. Burchard, he made the strike in Timbal Gulch, and Vincent has coined the most money out of it! It's always that way!"

"But why does Vincent want this old ranch?" asked Devon.

"Because he has an idea that West London is gunna grow and grow.



the two old boys. It 'll get you talked of in a good way all through the range, too. But when it comes to doin' the business, I suppose you can see that I can't talk to three men. I'd rather talk to one, and you got the legal right to do the talkin'."

"Very well. What's your offer?"

"They've named ten thousand."

"They have. Not I," Devon retorted. "I have a better offer."

"Did Burchard bid more than that?"

"You knew he was after it, did you?"

"Burchard is so big, now," Way said with a grin, "that every time he moves, what he does is pretty well known. We knew Burchard was after it, the same reason as Vincent!"

"I don't suppose you'll tell me that reason?"

And he's got all kinds of plans. This here is the closest farm land. Gunna dig deep wells here and raise truck garden vegetables for West London. This here is the closest land for the runnin' of cattle. Gunna run a lot of cows here, and fat them for the West London market. He says he'll have to spend a lot of money to make the place pay, but when it does, he says it 'll be another gold mine for him!"

"And the price?" Devon inquired.

"Somebody said ten thousand," Way replied. "Burchard offered you more. How much more?"

"Five thousand more."

"Well, right off I might offer you sixteen thousand. But I won't. I'm gunna lay the cards down on the table. Vincent told me that I was to bid as

"Back up, and get out, Way, or I'll let light into you!"



high as twenty-five thousand dollars, which is his top price. I won't try to buy in for sixteen or eighteen thousand. I'll come right to the top to begin with. Suppose I say twenty-five thousand dollars? I can tell Vincent that I couldn't get it out of you for a penny less. I'm pretty tired of seeing him get the lion's share of everything."

"Twenty-five thousand dollars!" Harry muttered. "Why, that's a mighty pile of money!"

"That's a hundred dollars a month clear income and not a lick of work done," Way said sharply. "That's how much money it is. A hundred a month forever—and twenty-five thousand dollars still left at the end of forever!"

Two minutes passed in silence.

"Well, Devon," asked Way, impatiently, "d'you think I'm doing right by you? Could anything be fairer than that? That's the top price!"

"Suppose I should want to try my own hand at this game of growing vegetables and beef?"

"Nothin' to stop you except capital," was the cheerful response. "Cost forty-fifty thousand dollars to do what Vincent wants to do with the land."

Devon half closed his eyes.

He was no business man. The speculations of the gaming table were his forte, or half-amateur wars such as the revolutions in Spanish-American republics, so-called.

But he knew that wealth could be taken from the soil. What weary days of labor went into the making of such money he had seen, also; nevertheless, it was true that his place was the best farming ground near West London. Perhaps there was in this a speculation sufficiently attractive to make Burchard willing to send a murderer to brush him aside and leave only these two old men on the place—and they with no legal right to the ground!

Twenty-five thousand dollars, even divided as he proposed to divide it, would richly increase his capital. It was thrice what he ever had expected

to get from these semibarren hills.

"It is a good price," he said aloud.

"A good price?" cried Way, his eyes sparkling with impatience. "I tell you, it's a hell of a bang-up robbery, a price like that! Vincent is a fool for once, to offer any such a thing!"

"Aye, it sort of looks that way," said Harry. "I hardly ever heard of such a whackin' heap of money. Eh, Jim?"

Old Jim stiffened a little, and removed his pipe from between his white teeth.

"We ain't gunna sell," said he.

Way shrugged his shoulders.

"The old boy is kind of batty, I guess. But what about it, Devon? D'you close?"

"Why—" began Devon.

"Don't need no papers. Shake hands on it, and it's closed!" suggested Way.

Jim strode suddenly between Devon and the other.

"Way," he said, "git off the land! We ain't gunna talk no more to you!"

## CHAPTER X

### TELLTALE FOOTPRINTS



LD Jim was a man of such exceeding mildness, except with Harry, that this crisp and insulting language was a thunder shock to Devon.

He could not believe his ears as Jim repeated:

"I've told you once. I tell you twice. Git off of the land. I don't like the looks of ye!"

"You damn old rattle bones!" cried Way, blood rushing to his face. "What you—"

"Back up!" said Jim, his lean hand on the handle of his Colt. "In all my life I never have had gents talk to me like this here. Back up, and get out, Way, or I'll let light into you!"

"Devon," cried Way, "this old fool will spoil the deal for you if you sit by

and let him talk like this. I gotta lot of patience, but by God, they's a bottom to the deepest well!"

Devon, amazed, stepped up beside Jim.

"I'm sorry," he said to Way, "but we're partners of sixty-five years' standing, you see, and what Jim says will have to go, I'm afraid."

The face of Way turned purple, splotted with rage and incredulity.

"Why, God A'mighty, man! You're chuckin' ten thousand dollars of honest money over your shoulder."

"It ain't honest," said Jim. "There never was a penny of Tucker Vincent's money made honest. And that I know!"

Way turned on his heel, strode to his pony, and mounted.

"Devon!" he called.

"I'm sorry," said Devon, following him a little, "that you've found rough language here, Way. I'm mightily sorry. But Harry and Jim mean more to me than a price on this place."

"You've had your chance," Way blurted out, biting his lips with extreme passion. "What I say is—God help a fool that won't help himself!"

He jerked the pony around and rushed it furiously away.

Then Harry took the arm of his partner.

"Jim," said he, "I don't want to ask no foolish questions, but I'd like to know what's in the mind of you? You talkin' as though you owned the place! Why—my God, Jim, it's almost as though you was takin' up Walt in his offer to us!"

"I'm takin' nothin'," said Jim, growing decidedly red at the mere thought of such a thing. "But I'm talkin' for Walt's own good. You two come here, will you?"

He led the way to the hitching rack.

"Look there, Harry, if your pore old eyes can see that far!"

"Me? I ain't bat-blind like you! And even if I was, I could see the print of a bar-shoe, there."

"The kind of a shoe they'd put on a hoss, say, that had the thrush?"

"Well, maybe."

"You see that, Walt?"

"I see that, of course."

"Now, Walt, if you'll slant an eye over there—"

The eye of Devon was by no means accustomed to the sign of the trail, but this was an imprint as clear as a photograph upon a field of white. It showed the deep incision of a horse's shoe, with a bar across the heels of it, at a spot where Way had not ridden that day.

"Is that the same print?" Devon inquired.

"Son," said Jim, "it is!"

"But there might be other horses wearing the same shoes?"

"Thrush would mostly come of stable-kept hosses—like that flash mustang of Way's. They ain't many stable-kept hosses around here. But when Way wants a hoss, he wants it bad, and so he keeps up his best, and throws the grain into 'em, regardless!"

"I don't see," said Devon, "that this hoof mark is so very important. Of course, any man can ride across our range if he wants to."

"Sure he can," returned Jim, "if he wants exercise that bad and can't get enough ridin' through the dog-gone mountains."

Harry took off his battered felt hat and passed his calloused hand over his head tenderly.

"It's like this, Walt," he explained carefully. "They ain't been but one rain in a month. That rain was five days back. And it come at night. Half an hour of hard rain, and then it quit. Now you step on this ground."

Devon complied.

"Hard, ain't it?"

"As a brick!"

"Sure it is. Would a hoss make much mark on that?"

"I don't suppose so."

"Wal, it wouldn't. Not much more'n on a stone. But look at that



The crowd swirled along the street like a current of water

print! It sure is plain to the eye."

"Yes. It's deep."

"That there rain come early. About nine. Jest as we was turnin' in to sleep. It rattled loud on the roof, and I went off dreamin' on the tune of it. It stopped soon, Jim said. A wind come up out of the south and dried the ground again, so's by mornin' the surface was hard agin. Your heels didn't pick up no earth when you walked. Well, old son, that print was made while the ground was still wet! Look how easy the toe of the shoe slosed out of the deep hole it had made! That happened durin' the rain or mighty shortly after. And it means that this here Way was sashaying around the premises of our ranch in the dark. What for? Where was he headed? He sure didn't call at our house that night!"

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GATHERING OF THE MOB



HARRY was the first to mount, and by the time the other two were in their saddles, he was jogging his horse in short circles around them. Finally his course touched the edge of the tank,

then he came back up the slope to his companions, looking worried.

"What would a man come here for after dark but mud?" he asked.

"Maybe it's a kind of a healin' mud," said Jim. "It's got a bad enough smell to be mighty good for something."

"A man ain't a bear to waller in mud like a hog!" said Harry.

Jim looked on him in disgust.

"There's a man," he said to Devon, "that's one of the most newspaper readingest gents that I ever heard tell of. But still he don't know about mud baths!"

"Who'd take a mud bath in green slime like that?" asked Harry. "Full of wigglers, too!"

"Wal, to take a look at that there tank," Jim remarked, "I'd say that was what brought Way over here!"

"To sit in the mud?" Devon grinned. "Why, he's welcome to come and sit here forever, if he wants to!"

"You laugh," said Jim, "but supposin' that that's a good medical mud, why, it'd be worth as much as a mine!"

"How come?" Harry asked.

"Folks would come over here in stacks. Tucker Vincent or Les Burchard could build up a great big hotel, and charge as high as five or six dol-

lars a day to live in it. And every mud bath they'd charge ten dollars more. They'd haul in piles of cash!"

"If Way came over, and not for a mud bath," smiled Devon, "what other reason could he have had? Both Burchard and Vincent are mining men. Couldn't it be that they're after pay dirt?"

"It's nacheral to think that way," said Jim, "but there ain't an inch of the highest mountains, even, that ain't been worked over by prospectors around here; and if one man has tramped up and down this here ranch, tappin' every outcrop of rock, I've seen a hundred. There ain't any gold in these here stones, Walt!"

"If we say that he didn't come for gold and he didn't come for — mud, perhaps. What's left?"

"Aye, that's what we'd like to know. That's what we *will* know," said Harry.

They rode back to the shack, where Devon left them, with a double question to consider.

Would it be possible to carry out the plan which Burchard and Vincent were reported to have conceived, of selling what cattle they had at a high price in West London, and herding in fresh droves of cheaper beef from the north to fatten on this range, and sell in turn?

But, above all, why had Way made this night excursion?

Then Devon rode off, without thinking fit to tell his partners of the attack which had been made upon him the night before. However, he had barely crossed the first row of hills when, at a sound of hoofs, he turned and saw Harry coming after him on the little jinny, whose head bobbed patiently up and down under the great burden it had to carry.

"Did I forget something, Harry?" asked Devon.

The old man looked at him with brightened eyes.

"You did," said he. "You forgot

that it would take a pile of weight off the mind of Vincent or of Burchard, both, if you was to cash in your checks!"

"Are you coming along to take care of me?"

"Maybe I look old for that," said Harry, "but I still can see things that get between me and the sun."

"But there's good old Jim, left out in the shack alone."

"That's true, but somebody has gotta take care of the ranch and watch out; and if they come to jump the house while Jim is there, they're gunna think that they've run into a cyclone. He sleeps with a sawed-off shotgun under his head." Harry chuckled. "They ain't gunna bother Jim none. He's dried up like a wild cat—there's nothin' to him much except his teeth and his claws! I'll go on with you!"

Devon knew it was useless to argue. The old men looked upon him as a child, and he understood that they must have their way, so the two jogged on side by side back to West London. They had climbed to the edge of the town when a roar came up from Timbal Gulch behind them, like the roar of the wind through crowded pine trees, and they saw many men climbing up the twisting trails to the town.

"Somebody's made a strike. West London is gunna howl to-night!" declared Harry.

They had barely put the horses up in the livery stable when the front ranks of the crowd reached the level of the town and spilled up the main street like a current of water, swirling from side to side, drawing in every idler on the way, sucking the clerks out of stores, the citizens out of their houses.

The saloons were the only dams which could hold that force, and inside of these segments of the crowd were detached and foamed and shouted. The swinging doors flapped constantly, like wings, and the word went out that one Tom Fagan had split open a veritable



pouch of gold, and that behind the pouch a broad, rich vein appeared, promising wealth in unknown quantities unless it pinched out soon.

Tom Fagan himself, in the "Main Chance," was inviting the entire town to drink. He bought two barrels of whisky outright, and had them broached and placed one on each side of the main street. Two bartenders guarded each barrel, and served out the drinks free to all who passed, giving forth dippers filled with the liquid fire.

Other bartenders labored in the Main Chance itself; and every saloon in the town was filled to the doors.

No one was immune from the excitement. The miners rejoiced because it was apparent that Timbal Gulch held countless possibilities still in reserve; the luckless prospectors were cheered for the same reason; the gamblers, confidence men, pickpockets, yeggs, and social parasites of all kinds grew gay with the assurance that there was still more honest blood to be drawn upon profitably.

Old Harry insisted that he and Devon should keep clear of the mob. Because, as he said, this was exactly the sort of situation in which a man shot through the back would fall almost unnoticed.

THIS POWERFUL HUMAN DRAMA OF BLOOD AND IRON AND GOLD  
WILL BE CONTINUED IN MUNSEY'S NEXT MONTH



#### MAY MORN

SUNSHINE on the grasses,  
Blossoms on the hill,  
Songs of thrush and linnet,  
Ripple of the rill.

Every hour that passes  
Chants a roundelay;  
Every joyous minute  
Sings a song in May.

Breezes gayly dancing  
Through the orchard trees,  
Dew drops brightly gleaming,  
Set in emerald leas.

All the world entrancing  
Brings a message gay,  
Earth an Eden seeming,  
On a morn in May.

*L. Mitchell Thornton*





## The Sun

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1927

### "Lindbergh Flies Alone"

Alone?

Is he alone at whose right side rides Courage, with Skill within the cockpit and Faith upon the left? Does solitude surround the brave when Adventure leads the way and Ambition reads the dials? Is there no company with him for whom the air is cleft by Daring and the darkness is made light by Emprise?

True, the fragile bodies of his fellows do not weigh down his plane; true, the fretful minds of weaker men are lacking from his crowded cabin; but as his airship keeps her course he holds communion with those rarer spirits that inspire to intrepidity and by their sustaining potency give strength to arm, resource to mind, content to soul.

Alone? With what other companions would that man fly to whom the choice were given?

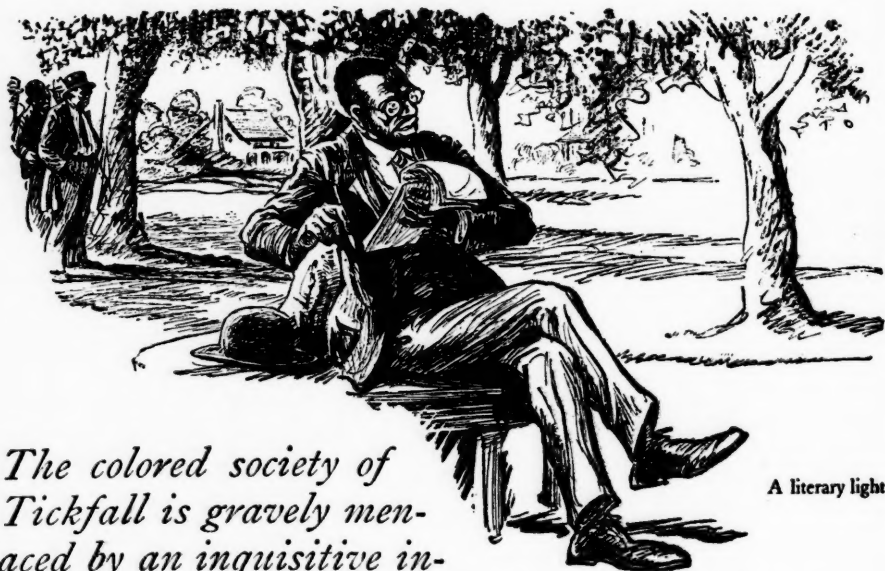
*Written by Harold M. Anderson ten hours before conclusion of the flight. Reprinted by permission of the New York "Sun"*



**COLONEL CHARLES A. LINDBERGH**

He made the first unaccompanied, transatlantic flight—and wasn't even afraid of Friday! Leaving Roosevelt Field, N. Y., at 7:52 a.m., May 20, 1927, he landed on Le Bourget Field, Paris, next day, Saturday, at 10:24 p.m. (Paris time), 3,600 miles in 33½ hours

# Author, Author!



A literary light

*The colored society of Tickfall is gravely menaced by an inquisitive intruder who undertakes to write a book about it*

By E. K. Means



FOR many years it has been remarked of a certain type of colored man in the South that just as soon as he learns to read and write, he feels a call to preach. Roy Scoot varied this course of events to a certain extent, for as soon as he learned to read and write he contracted author's itch. The only relief was to get a pencil and some writing paper, and scratch.

While Roy was suffering in the first stage of this disease, he made a valuable discovery. White people are delighted when they see their names printed in a book or a newspaper. For fear that no one will take the trouble

to write their biographies, they write their autobiographies. They enjoy reading the scribbling of any author who scribbles about them; but a colored man does not see it that way at all. He belongs to a sensitive and secretive race, and he shrinks from publicity. He doesn't want anybody to "write him up."

One day, as Roy sat upon a bench in the village where he lived, he rested his pad upon his knee and chewed a pencil meditatively. A negro friend, impelled by curiosity, came across the street to inquire:

"Whut you doin'?"

"Writin'."

"Whut you writin' about?"

"About people."

"Who?"

"Well, I'm thinkin' dat I oughter write a few words about you," Roy said. "I could put you in a book as a nigger man whut axes 'terrogations. Dat would be a tol'ble good write up fer you."

The inquisitive friend sat down upon the ground and began to plead. He explained that he was a poor man, and had a hard time to make a living. The white folks "soupspicioned" him of taking things which did not belong to him without asking permission of the owner thereof, and so they did not want him around. The only jobs he could get were outside jobs, where there was nothing he could carry away but the windmill, the ice house, and the grindstone.

Besides that, continued the unlucky negro, he had to be absent from the town for two weeks of every year when the grand jury met, and that absence broke in upon his work. Right now it was being whispered around that he had stolen a feather bed. Somebody did steal a feather bed, and there was a small hole in the ticking; and the thief, whoever he was, jogged along the road and "wasted out" some feathers on the way until he got as far as the cabin of the deponent. Then he had stopped up the hole and had traveled on, and had sold the feathers for four dollars. Of course, they traced those feathers as far as deponent's cabin and falsely accused him.

"Too bad, too bad!" Roy Scoot sympathized, making a sound with his tongue like the cluck of an old hen.

"Yes, suh, an' it might git wuss," his troubled friend said uneasily. "Dat's how come I axes you so earnest not to write me up. Dar's a whole passel of people talkin' about me now, an' I don't crave to hab 'em readin' about me, too. I wants to git obscure."

"How much will you pay me not to write you up?" Roy inquired.

"Four dollars!" the negro promptly replied. "I jes' happen to hab four dollars on me, an' dat's all de money I is got."

"Pass it over, brudder," Roy told him, holding out an eager hand. "Sweeten my writin' mitt wid four dollars, an' you'll paralyze my fingers as fer as writin' yo' name is concerned. I think you is gittin' off light!"

"De Lawd bless you, Roy," the other man said in a tone of great relief. "You is suttinly a noble nigger man!"

He passed over the money and walked away with the air of a man who had escaped a great calamity.

This incident had given Roy an idea which had taken him happily and prosperously upon visits to a number of Louisiana villages. He had learned to dress the part of a successful author. He had learned to speak in a tone of authority. He knew how to surround himself with the spectacular tools of his trade—a portable writing desk, a portable typewriter, several loose-leaf notebooks, a pocket full of pencils, a near-gold fountain pen, a patent ink eraser, a patent pencil sharpener, and a pair of spectacles almost as large as the headlights of an automobile.

And oh, ye authors, heed this! Everywhere that Roy Scoot went, he so managed that he was paid, not for writing, but for not writing!

Some fellows have all the luck. Roy's first purchase of writing materials had never been exhausted. He had never yet been permitted to use them. He sat around and looked important, asked questions and looked insistently curious, took notes and looked wise, investigated and looked shocked. After a while he was invariably waited upon by certain parties of his race who were financially able to convince him that the people of their locality were not worth writing about, and that it would be worth something to him if they could persuade him not to try.



Roy was always open to persuasion; and now in this happy state of mind he arrived in Tickfall.

## II

THE Big Four were sitting quietly in their loafing place in the Henscratch when the door opened easily, and there came in one of the best displays of whiskers that the four men had ever seen. The crop of hair covered its owner's face and left the man behind it looking like a mule gazing through a hedge of boxwood; but the bravest thing about the new arrival was that hirsute facial exhibit, for the rest of the man appeared meek and timid.

He came forward to the table where the quartet sat, and coughed apologetically behind his whiskers and his hand.

After their first glance, all four men appeared to be busy about something. Pap Curtain was filling his pipe, Skeeter Butts was rolling a cigarette, Figger Bush was tying a shoe lace, and the Rev. Vinegar Atts was gazing with an air of pious meditation into the crown of his high silk hat; but when they heard the cough, they all broke away from their tasks and glanced up.

Poising his cigarette upon three fingers of his left hand, Skeeter said:

"Git to talkin'! Come out from behin' de hedge whar you is hidin'. We kin see you behin' de brush. Tell it! Us is used to bad news."

"I'm sorry," the stranger said. "My name is Roy Scoot."

"Dat's a pretty sorry name fer a sorry son of sorrer," Skeeter responded. "You hab our deepest sympathy; but I reckon it ain't all yo' fault. Did yo' payrents git a preacher to sprinkle dat name on you? Us Big Fo' niggers ain't got no names to brag on; so whut does you want?"

"I jes' come to town," Roy announced.

"Dis here is a good town to come to," Skeeter assured him. "I knows dem whut likes it. I heard tell of a

nigger who died an' went to heaven, an' dey found him blubberin' in de mouth of his heavenly toot hawn, an' sheddin' tears in de heavenly hash because he said he wanted to go back to Tickfall."

Roy Scoot thrust both hands into his pockets and brought forth a writing tablet and a pencil. Laying these out upon the table, he fumbled in another pocket, brought forth his large and impressive spectacles, and adjusted them to his face as if adjusting a blind bridle to a mule's head. He examined the point of his pencil, wet it with his tongue, and suddenly his mind and apologetic voice assumed a tone as harsh as the guttural cadences of a prosecuting attorney, as he said:

"Dat's a most int'rustin' religious fack. May I inquire de name of de deceased brudder, de place of his residence upon de earth, de names of any survivin' relatives, ef any, an' de time an' place an' succumstances of his death?"

"Whut? Who? Which?" Skeeter stuttered, dropping his unlighted cigarette upon the floor, where it lay at his feet, the paper open, the makings scattered, a total loss, an absolute ruin. Then he resorted to the trick of all reluctant witnesses when called upon for testimony. "I don't remember," he said hastily. "I cain't keep in my mind all de names of all de dead niggers. Whut you crave to know fer?"

"Dat's part of my bizness in dis town," Roy replied.

"Huh!" Pap Curtain said. "You ain't got much to do, copyin' de names of dead niggers. I figgered you wus some kind of music nigger. My guess wus dat you blowed a trombone through yo' whiskers."

"Naw, I don't make no kind of music noise," Roy said.

"Bless de Lawd fer dat, brudder!" Vinegar Atts howled. "We don't keer whut you does fer a livin' jes' so you ain't noisy about it. We loves peace an' quiet."



"Ef you don't play music, mebbe you tells forchines," Figger Bush remarked.

"Naw, I don't foller dat trade, either," Roy said. "Balaam wus a forchine teller in de Bible times, an' a jackass told him whar to git off. Dat don't 'pear to me to be a hon'ble job."

"We's done made two guesses, an' we's still in doubt," Vinegar Atts sighed. "Whut is yo' bizness? Kin you speak about it in public, or does you keep it a secret?"

"I ain't said much about it, but 'tain't no secret," Roy said. "My visit to yo' city is fer de puppus of conductin' a survey of de religious status an' social condition an' racial notability of de people of our color in Tickfall."

"You is—which?" Vinegar Atts howled, showing the whites of his eyes. "Whut am a survey? How you gwine cornduck it? Atter you git it cornducked, whut you aim to do wid it?"

"Sounds like somepin whut mought go off an' blow a feller to de kingdom of hellelujah," Figger Bush commented, clawing at his woolly head. "I ain't never saw a survey in my life. Whut do she look like? Does you make it or jes' cornduck it? Ef you makes it, whut does you make it out of?"

"I writes it in a book," Roy replied, shaking the pad which he held in his hand. "Feller whut takes de number of 'habitants of a place, he makes a survey. Feller whut takes de taxes, he makes a survey. De grand jury makes a survey of de moral condition. When de smallpox busts loose, doctors makes a survey, an' puts all us niggers in de pest house."

"Good Lawd!" Vinegar Atts howled in consternation. "Did you say it wus somepin religious?"

"Dat's right," Roy assured him. "I desires to ascertain whut relation de people of our race an' color sustains todes individual an' social piety an' practical religious activity."

"Dat monkeys wid my bizness in

Tickfall," Vinegar remarked. "I'm de only nigger preacher in town."

"You two niggers oughter git together an' hab a long talk," Skeeter Butts said, relieved to know that his business did not seem to be involved in the investigation. "Ef Vinegar Atts is gwine be wrote up in a book, I shore will read dat book an' lend de loant of it to my friends. I hope you'll survey Vinegar complete an' write him up in full. I knows some things about him dat I craves to tell you. I'm shore Vinegar will fergit to mention 'em."

"Ef you craves to survey de religious state of Vinegar Atts, I hopes you'll come an' interview me," Pap Curtain snarled. "I got a whole heap to tell, an' when I gits through tellin' you'll shore hab a bird's-eye view—a buzzard's eye."

"I don't aim to write de biography of any man," Roy explained. "Dis ain't de hist'ry of no man's life. I merely studies racial, religious, and sociological characteristics, an' formulates my conclusions fer de instruction of yuther investigators who make deductions and recommendations."

This verbal fusillade put every man down on the ground, so to speak. It seemed like an attack in force. It left them scared. When it ceased, they felt that they had had a providential escape from a hideous danger.

"Well," Figger Bush said weakly, when the smoke had cleared away, "I ain't heard of no law ag'in' it in dis town. I don't reckon you got to take out no huntin' license, or nothin' like dat, to snoop aroun' an' see whut you kin see when you ain't got yo' gun; but don't put me in no book. I resigns in favor of Vinegar Atts."

"I jes' dropped in fer a minute to see whut sort of place dis wus," Roy said, as he rose and picked up his pencil and writing pad. "I don't think de Henscratch will aid me much in my religious investigation. In fack, I surmise dat dis place is a moral turpitude, an' had oughter be suppressed as a

contamination an' a nuisance. I will so repote in my book; but I hopes to see you all agin, an' I'll visit dis place frequent, so I kin git all de facks in de case."

He turned and walked away, and the eyes of the four men bored into his back until he vanished through the door. For a long time they were silent, as if dazed by what they had heard. At last Vinegar Atts spoke, shaking his head uneasily and showing the whites of his eyes.

"Whut do Gawdlemighty think about dat?" he said.

"I bet dat's a hot book he's writin'," Pap Curtain sighed. "I reckon, befo' he gits through, all our coat tails will be scorchin'."

"Us better organize a fire department," Skeeter suggested gloomily. "Dat coon is one of dese here moral firebrands. He'll sot dis town on fire!"

### III

SEVERAL days passed, and nothing happened to disturb the Big Four. Then Skeeter Butts came in from a trip to the post office. His yellow face was drawn in lines of anxiety, his collar was loose, and his tie was flying outside of his waistcoat. They knew that something highly distressing must have happened, when the dressiest negro in Tickfall was so negligent of his appearance.

"I'm done heard a rumor, bruders," he said in a gaspy voice, due to his excitement and his rapid walking.

"Is somebody gwine to visit us?" Vinegar asked.

"Naw, somebody's 'vestigatin' us," replied Skeeter, glaring around his place of business as if to find something which should be hidden from sight before the inspector arrived. "Yes, suh, we's bein' examined!"

"Dat sounds like somepin very special," Pap Curtain commented, searching his soul for evidences of crime and signs of guilt. "I didn't know de gram jury wus in session. I ain't done

nothin', but whut train is de rest of you niggers leavin' out on?"

"It 'pears like it ain't got to de gram jury yit," Skeeter said; "but I don't crave to hab my bizness an' my customers 'vestigated. Dat Roy Scoot is axin' questions. He found out dat my Henscratch wus once a sinful saloon, an' I wus a onregen'rit saloon keeper. He found out dat in de long ago de niggers use to play craps on de ground under de trees behin' de saloon, and dey wus always clawin' at de ground to pick up deir dice, an' so my saloon got de name of de Henscratch. He found out dat my Scratch is de hang-out fer all de ragged sons of rest an' all de sorry sons of sorrier. It 'pears like my bizness an' Vinegar's is gittin' axed about pertickler."

"Whut do he want to know all about yo' bizness fer?" Pap asked.

"He 'terrogated eve'ybody about whether de Henscratch makes any real cont'buton to de religious devel-opement an' speritual welfare an' domestic peace an' happiness of dis here communerty," Skeeter wailed. "Of co'se, all dem igernunt niggers he axed didn't know whut in de name of mud dat coon was talkin' about, so dey denied it. Dey said no, it didn't never do nothin' like dat, an' never had. Why, I ain't igernunt, but I don't know whut more'n half of dem words means myself. You-all know how dat coon shot off dem big mouthfuls of words in here dat time. Natchelly, us don't plead guilty to nothin' like dat!"

"Whut you let a thing like dat pester yo' mind fer?" Pap Curtain snarled. "Why don't you jes' go down dar an' tell Roy Scoot dat yo' Scratch don't do a durn bit of good to nobody, an' den pull his whiskers an' kick his pants, an' tell him to 'tend to his own bizness an' leave you be?"

"But he's writin' it up in a book!" Skeeter cried with a whine of fear. "I don't want it writ up dat I pulled his hair an' kicked him. When it gits in a book, you cain't never git it out!"

"Then hire somebody else to beat him up," Pap said. "Hide in a alley an' wait till he goes by an' hit him wid a brick."

"I think we ought to let him git all his facks wrote up an' den steal his book," Figger Bush suggested. "We Big Four ain't never 'vestigated fer our own bizness as good as we should have. We gits a few facks an' guesses at de rest. Now we'll let Roy Scoot examine, an' steal his book, an' chase him out of town; an' whutever he finds out about our town, us Big Four kin use in givin' our advices to de people."

"Dat sounds good, but I don't like folks whut writes things down on paper," Pap Curtain said. "I once wucked a farm fer a farmer who drawed up whut he called a corntrack, on paper, wid pen an' ink. Eve'y time I wanted to do whut I pleased, he pulled down dat writin' from behin' de clock an' read it to me dat I done promise to do so an' so, an' I done solemnly agree not to do so an' so. It looked like I couldn't git by dat paper no way; so I swiped dat corntrack from behind dat clock, an' made a nigger track down de middle of de road wid my feet, an' ain't never see dat white man since."

"Dat's whut skeers me so bad," Skeeter howled. "Ef a white man kin write on paper an' git you in all kinds of trouble, whut will a nigger man write on paper an' do? Lawd, nobody knows de sorrers we'll hab!"

"Now, about my Shoofly Church," Vinegar said in a worried tone. "I figger dat we's doin' mighty well in our congregation onder de present existin' succumstances; but Lawd, I don't want no nigger snoopin' aroun' observin' de awful results! He might not ketch on to de real reason fer certain things, an' might jes' record 'em so; an' no nigger church kin stan' dat."

"You mean de results ain't satisfactory?" Skeeter inquired.

"We average up tol'able well," Vinegar explained; "but a church is

like a patent med'cine health restorer—it has got to be took reg'lar. Doctors an' preachers cain't make deir patients do like we prescribe. Dey tears up de prescription an' takes somepin dat ain't good fer 'em; so we don't hab de success whut we ought to git, and whut we deserve by our hard wuck."

"It 'pears to me like Roy Scoot oughter put dat statement in his new book," Figger Bush remarked. "Dat will esplain eve'ything."

"But ef he esplains eve'ything at de start, people won't read his book," Vinegar objected. "Whut he aims to do is to write a book dat will scandalize us."

"Why don't you an' Skeeter git together an' invite Roy Scoot to come an' ax all de questions he wants to know, an' show him eve'ything he wants to see? Den you'll know exactly whut he aims to put in his book about you," Pap Curtain suggested.

"Dat's a good notion," Figger Bush agreed. "Ef you got somepin you don't want him to see, you kin hide it, an' ef you don't want him to know de truth about somepin, you kin lie to him. A book ain't nothin', nohow, but a pack of lies. Tell him some!"

"Shore!" Pap continued, glad to find some one to indorse his suggestion. "Dat is de c'reck thing. Roy looks like a harmless ol' coot to me. No nigger man amounts to much dat grows as much hair as he do. He's some kind of religium crank, an' I bet he ain't got mo' dan half sense."

"Dese here half-wit religium cranks am de most dangerous people whut is," Vinegar declared. "You git a nigger or a white man who believes dat he is sont by de Lawd, an' directed by de Lawd, an' guarded by de Lawd, an' de good Lawd shore got a noosance on His hands. De people suffers pestications ontill de good Lawd takes dat pusson to de land of heavenly bliss."

"I moves we go an' hunt dis Scoot nigger an' tell him to scoot out of town," Skeeter said, rising to his feet

and picking up his hat. "Dat coon ain't got no divine call to come buttin' into our bizness. Ef we move ag'in' him in a solid body, we suttinly kin git some motion out'n him."

"All right," Vinegar agreed. "It ain't reg'lar fer us to chase a nigger out of town. Most in gin'ral we's shawt a nigger, because de cotehouse does de chasin', an' we's glad to welcome a feller who comes in to fill de gap; but in dis case I don't mind tellin' Scoot to skedaddle."

The four men marched up the crooked street that led to the rear of the courthouse. Looking around to locate their man, they found him sitting on a bench on the courthouse lawn, writing on a pad.

For a few minutes they peeped at him around the corner of the building, and they decided that he made a good appearance sitting there. He was the only literary man that the colored race in Tickfall had ever produced. Negroes had been seen sitting in that yard every day for at least one hundred years, but this was doubtless the only one who had ever been seen writing with paper and pencil. Most of them had been either eating or sleeping.

Finally the Big Four walked over and interrupted the author's creative efforts. They came directly to the matter in hand.

"Whut kind of pussons is you writin' up, Scoot?" Vinegar demanded.

"Important religious cullud pussons in Tickfall," Scoot said. "Dat means you, head of de list. Nex', important onregen'rit pussons in Tickfall whut is opposed to religium. Dat means Skeeter Butts, head of de list. Whut you is, you is, an' I'm gittin' de facks straight, so dar won't be no come-back. Now Pap here—he's de best-knowned man in police circles in dis whole town, so he heads another list. Figger, he ain't nothin', head of de list. No, 'tain't no trouble to git plenty to write about. It's powerful hard to pick an' choose whut to write, an' how much!"

"Ef you's tryin' to write up de real religium leaders of dis town, how come you don't pay a little mind to de lady folks?" Pap Curtain inquired. "Men folks jes' nachelly ain't religious. Dey am de lost sheep of de house of de Lawd; but lady folks is bawn on de Lawd's side. Dey jes' nachelly leans dat way. Vinegar couldn't run his church ef de sisteren didn't he'p him."

"Dat's right," Vinegar agreed.

"I don't know any females," Scoot said. "Of co'se, befo' I gits through, I know dey'll hab to be considered."

"You bet dey will!" Figger informed him. "You got to gib a heap of yo' book to de female folks in Tickfall. Look at de mag'zines—got a girl's face on eve'y cover. You got to fill yo' book wid koodak pictures of de choc'late blondes of Tickfall."

"Most womens I know is objectionable pussons," Roy Scoot said. "Dey ain't got real good sense. I'm a little skeart of women. Dey always git me in a jam; an' de mo' religious dey is, de mo' pesticatedin' dey 'pears to be."

"We ain't got no roughneck women in dis town," declared Skeeter. "You kin put dat down in yo' book. Dey's all puffed ladies, an' dey got sense like a mule, too. I hab axed most of 'em to marry me, an' dey all had de gump-tion to refuse me an' git married to somebody else."

"I may turn my 'tention to dem atter while," Scoot said. "You mought interjuice me to some of de mo' influential females in de town."

"Shore!" Vinegar promptly replied. "Nothin' would please me better than ef you made yo' whole book a study of de lady folks of Tickfall. Dar ain't really no place fer a man in de same book wid a woman. I believe a manless book would be a gorgeous success. I know it would make a big hit wid me."

"I never thought of dat," Scoot said. "I figger it would be a good notion to git out two books, one about de men an' one about de women."



"Women an' chillun fust!" Vinegar said piously. "Dat's de solemn rule in our land an' country."

"Us will he'p you wid de woman book," Pap suggested eagerly. "I been married five times, an' I knows a heap about women. I's pussonly acquainted wid all de women in dis here town. Some of 'em ain't proud dat dey know me, but dey cain't deny it."

#### IV

"We done got dat nigger whar we want him now," Vinegar Atts exulted, as they walked away. "We'll shoo all de ol' hens in Tickfall into his yard an' let 'em scratch up all his flower beds!"

The men laid their plans with great deliberation. When everything was ready, they suggested to Roy Scoot that he should use the study of the Shoo-fly Church in which to do his work. It would be a good place, they told him, for the conferences necessary in his investigation.

Roy accepted this invitation, and then he began to worry just a little. It was about time that certain men in the town were calling upon him and asking him to suppress certain facts which had come to his knowledge. It was time that others were inquiring how much he would take to leave them entirely out of his book. It was time that the Big Four of Tickfall were showing uneasiness and leading the movement to persuade him, for a consideration, to discontinue his investigations and get out of town.

Instead of that, however, the Big Four had come up with the suggestion that he should widen his literary survey to include the women of the town, and had promised to tell him of all the domestic difficulties they knew, to narrate the details of every scandal, and to describe the incidents of every fight between husband and wife that they had ever witnessed. Moreover, they had offered him a place to do his work!

Roy decided that for the first time he would really have to do some writ-

ing. He would make "notes," and later he would read them to the Big Four as samples of what his book would contain when it was finished. So he sat down at a table in the study of the church and began to prepare what he called "hot shot."

On the second day of his work, he was interrupted.

The Big Four were not surprised when they walked up the hill to the church and found a mob of women crowding into the auditorium, overflowing the lawn on the front and sides of the sacred edifice, and splashing over the fence into the negro graveyard. The main body of the crowd formed a sort of a line leading to the door of the study of the Shoo-fly Church. As far as the four men were able to see, no one had yet been able to gain access to the room where Roy Scoot was barricaded.

"Lawd he'p us!" Pap Curtain exclaimed in hypocritical dismay. "Whut kin all dis here be?"

"Looks like some lady folks is come to repent of deir sins," Vinegar chuckled. "I never seen such a crowd at de church on a week day, an' not often on Sunday. I'm glad I ain't got to wuck wid 'em. Dey ain't assembled to talk wid me."

"I don't keer to 'sociate wid dat bunch," Figger Bush said in a tone of uneasiness. "A crowd like dat ain't 'sponsible."

"Aw, dat bunch won't bite you," Vinegar Atts said. "Anyhow, you take a chance. I'll clear 'em out so we kin git by."

"You lead de way," Pap commanded. "You own dis Gawspill wucks."

"Hey, you!" Vinegar howled. "Git out! Move aside! Gimme room ac-cawdin' to my size! Back up dar! Gee! Haw! Gangway!"

The best that Vinegar could do was to open a narrow lane through the crowd. The three men followed him, while the women were lined up on both sides, as if watching a parade.



The four men had marched through the crowd before it occurred to any one of them that they did not have anywhere to go.

"Whut is we pushin' through here fer?" Figger Bush asked, and no man knew the answer.

They did not cease their progress, however, until they arrived at the door of the little room in the rear of the church which Vinegar called his study. Every woman in the crowd was headed the same way. Vinegar tried the door, and found that it was securely locked. If he could have seen through the door he would have found it barricaded on the other side by a sofa, a bookcase, and a writing desk.

Vinegar beat upon the door and demanded admittance; but if there was any person on the other side he kept discreetly silent. Up to that time the women had said nothing, but when they found that not even Vinegar was permitted to enter his own private office, one bright-eyed colored girl with a red bandanna handkerchief tied around her head broke the silence.

"Dar's a man in dat room, revun—a man writin' a book," she said. "He writ us all a letter an' told us to come here to-day an' git our names in de book. He specified dat all de men folks wus gittin' writ up, an' dat he wanted all de ladies, too; but now he done locked hisself in dar, an' won't let us see him."

Then all the others began to talk.

"Dat's right!" they said. "We wants our names in de book. He specified dat he wanted de names an' de life hist'ry of all de leadin' cullud ladies in Tickfall. We all got a note from him!"

They all said the same thing with variations, and all begged to be admitted into the little study at once, so that they could attend to the matter and go about their regular business. Each one feared, too, that with so many leading ladies the books might be filled before her name was included.

All of them were acquainted with the Big Four. They reached out and grabbed the four men's arms and plucked at their coat pockets. Three of them had a firm grip upon the tails of Vinegar's Prince Albert coat when he whirled on them savagely.

"Aw, cut out all dat chin music!" he said angrily. "Fer Gawd's sake, keep yo' hands off'n my coat tails! Don't tear my clothes!"

Finally, to escape them, Vinegar climbed up on the steps which led to the door of the little room. The women were accustomed to seeing the negro preacher on a platform above them, so they became quiet, as if they expected him to make a speech.

Vinegar pretended to be ignorant of the whole matter, and tried to shoo them out toward the street. They did not respond to his appeal any more than a lot of setting hens. They demanded to see the man who was going to "write them up in a book."

"All right!" Vinegar said at last. "You folks wait right here until I go in an' talk to Brudder Scoot about dis. He's got to write you up one at a time, an' mebbe I kin he'p him do it." Vinegar turned and beat upon the door with his fist. "Open up, Brudder Scoot!" he pleaded. "I yearns fer a little civil conversation wid you. I craves to find out whut dis is all about."

Scoot had been listening from the other side of the door, for there was the sound of moving furniture; and then the door was opened just enough to admit Vinegar's portly form. It was closed and barricaded again by a man who was worried, frightened, and disgusted.

"Huh!" Vinegar grunted, when he squeezed into the little opening which Scoot allowed him. "Dis here is extremely annoyin'! When I lent you de loant of dis room, I didn't expeck you to receive all yo' lady folks in a mob, like you is. You's scandalizin' de church. How come?"

"It is suttinly disgustin'," Scoot

agreed. "I never seed de beat. You ought to put a stop to it!"

"I aims to," Vinegar said positively; "but you's de guilty party. Who is all dem outside lady friends, an' why?"

"I don't keer who dey is, or whut dey is, or why dey is, or whut dey want," Scoot said in a big breath, staring at Vinegar with scared eyes. "When I gives myself to writin' a book, I don't desire to be interrupted; so I locked de door. Eve'y nigger woman in dat yard has knocked on dat door about ten times! It made me feel like I wus on de inside of a snare drum."

"Whut did dey come here fer?" Vinegar asked. "Who invited 'em?"

"I figgered dey wus members of yo' congregation, an' had come to git spiritual advice, or somepin like dat," replied Scoot; "so I told 'em you wusn't here. Den, when they bragged deir brags dat dey would bust down de door, I put de furnicher against it."

"Well, I want you to know dat you done collected dis crowd," Vinegar said. "Dey ain't my congregation. When I axed 'em to go, dey howled about you writin' a book, an' begged me to git you to open up."

"How did dey know I wus writin' a book?" Scoot demanded. "I ain't told 'em not a word!"

Vinegar might have informed the author that the Big Four had spent a whole day and night in writing invitations to the women who now filled the premises. He might have told him that they had shamelessly forged Scoot's name by signing it to those communications; but it was not necessary to make this confession, and Vinegar knew a lot of people who had got into trouble by talking too much.

"Lawd! Lawd!" Vinegar exclaimed. "You set out in de cotehouse yard scribbling on a writin' pad, right befo' de eyes of all de folks, white an' black, an' den you wonder how anybody knows dat you is writin'! But

whut am de idea ob all dis gang? Is you gittin' facks fer yo' book?"

"I don't know a thing about dem people!" Scoot repeated impatiently. "I guess a few of 'em heard tell dat I wus writin' up Tickfall niggers in a book, so dey went aroun' an' invited all deir friends to git into de book wid 'em, an'—"

"Yep," Vinegar interrupted; "an' now you got a whole church full, an' a churchyard full, an' a graveyard full, an' I bet you'll hab a big book befo' you git through! Ef you leave any nigger woman out, she'll put a spider in yo' soup!"

Scoot sat and pondered this for a moment. Then he said:

"Revun, I ain't gwine to write no book about Tickfall, neither men or women. Dey ain't wuth writin' about. A man's a fool whut will write about de niggers of Tickfall. How kin I git away from dese women an' slip out of dis town unbeknownst an' unseen?"

"Dat ain't no trouble," Vinegar said. He rose and pointed to a certain door. "You kin go through dat door an' cross de meetin' house room, an' pass out de front door to de street. I will herd all dem women back behin' de church an' keep 'em dar ontill you go out de front an' skedaddle. Ef dey sees you, dey'll run you; but I'll hold 'em as long as I kin. Good-by, an' I don't keer ef you never come back."

Ten minutes later the stentorian voice of Vinegar was lining up the last batch of the women in the rear of the church.

"Hey! All you lady folks! Line up now! Now turn yo' backs to de church, like you wus havin' yo' pictures took! Eyes front! Hold dat pose! Don't move till I gib de word!"

And then Roy Scoot, carrying a portable desk and a portable typewriter, stooping over close to the ground like a man who was trying to catch a rat, sneaked across the lawn of the Shoofly Church and went away from Tickfall forever.

# Prairie War



*A romance of the stirring days when the Kansas border was a battleground of civil strife*

By Hugh Pendexter



HALTING in the path that led to the log house, Ma'am Milkent stared at the pencil of smoke stenciling the turquoise heavens beyond the rise north of Turkey Creek. She did not bother to set down her two huge buckets of water while she indulged in her somber scrutiny. She had the strength of a strong man, and was a worthy mate for a Kansas pioneer.

For several days she had watched the smoke that rose beyond the ridge, and the pale smudge cast a heavy shadow on her soul.

"Are you sunstruck, ma?" called a shrill voice, and a slip of a girl, as

dainty as a wild flower, stood framed in the low doorway.

"It's them Free-Staters, Larkspur," the mother replied heavily. "They worrit me something mortal. I do wish they'd pull out, like what your pap warned 'em to do afore he an' Ham went away. Pap 'll act up bad when he gits back an' finds 'em still squattin' over there."

Ma'am Milkent was guilty of one touch of sentiment — she had named her only daughter after a flower. As she walked up the path, the girl prophesied:

"No good will come to pap and Ham crossing the line to ride with that Quantrell!"

"Hush, you little fool!" said her mother in a low voice.

"But ain't we alone?"

"We thought we was alone in the Kaw bottom," reminded Ma'am Milkent. "Then come the Lawrence jay-hawkers an' run us off."

The girl wrinkled her pert nose in disdain.

"The Kaw bottom's the last place I ever want to see again," she said.

"The trees are so scraggy and haggard, they look like they'd been out all night with witches. I'm glad we was run off."

"Larkspur, you keep shut," warned the mother. Then, suspiciously: "You've been at it agin. You've got a book hid somewhere. You talk like you'd been reading a book."

The girl laughed.

"Where'd I ever git a book?" she scoffed.

The amazon's gray eyes half closed, and then flew open, as if with an inspiration.

"You might 'a' got one from them Free-Statins' McGees over the ridge. You was quick enough to pick up their company. Free-Staters is always totin' tomfool books around!"

The girl turned her head that her mother might not see her face.

"Oh, the McGees are harmless," she said lightly. "Guthrie McGee wants to open land. His sister Evan isn't any older than me, and she can't be planning any games."

"They're Bostons, an' you know it. If they don't skeedaddle mighty quick, I'll be powerful sorry for 'em when your pap an' Ham git back. It's a Boston who wrote that lyin' 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' stuff. If that book ever gits into our house, I don't know what our Ham would do."

The girl wheeled, her small face transformed with anguish. Her voice trembled with suppressed sobs as she cried:

"He's my brother, but he's a beast!"

"Larkspur!"

"He is! He is!" passionately insisted the girl; but she softened her apostasy by flinging her arms around her mother so that she might bury her curly head in the deep bosom.

Ma'am Milkent dropped a bucket of water and gently caressed her daughter's yellow hair. Could Larkspur have seen her mother's face, she would have been startled by its tragic despair. The gaunt trees in the valley of the Kaw could have presented no more haggard appearance than did Ma'am Milkent's visage, as she stared over the grassy ridge with unseeing eyes and endeavored to discover what the to-morrows were likely to bring to her people.

As if ashamed of her weakness, she gave the girl a gentle push and said:

"There, there! Ham lives accordin' to his lights. He don't drink an' gamble, like your brother Joel does."

"Joel lives wrong," admitted the girl; "but he ain't got that awful thing in his mind, like Ham has; and it don't seem as if little Eli could belong to our tribe."

The mother's face became gloomy. Her youngest son was an enigma to the whole family. His love for the beautiful was set down by all, the girl possibly excepted, as the mark of an effeminate nature. Joel, the second son, hard-drinking, hard-gaming, hard-riding, and free with his gun, tried to cover up his brother's weakness; and their father, busy raiding Free-Staters and reading the Old Testament, was not difficult to deceive.

Ham Milkent, one with his father in intense hatred of all anti-slavery people, even extending his enmity to their dogs and cattle, was not so easily fooled. When Eli crossed his path, he would glower and ponder. The girl, boyish in her daring, loved her younger brother second best. Joel, the boastful sinner, was her favorite. It was perhaps because she understood him better than she understood Eli.

Ma'am set about her cooking.



"Where's Eli now?" she asked querulously.

"Oh, just mooning around — chasing butterflies, watching birds, and the like."

"An' lookin' for pretty flowers," added the mother, with a sigh. "Flowers an' singin' birds in times like these! I wish we'd stuck in Missouri."

"But he draws pictures of them, ma. Mebbe he'll be a great picture drawer, and make pictures for books."

"God forbid! A picture drawer in our fambly! That's what the North's made up of — picture drawers! Where'd he ever git that notion? Not from the Milkents! Your pap's folks could scarcely write their names. Not from the Hawkinses! My folks was too busy tryin' to make an honest livin' to go in for such trash. There's pictures in our Bible, an' that's enough for any honest home. There, there! You git out in the sun, an' find Eli. Don't bother me by makin' believe work."

The girl knew that her mother preferred to be alone, and she was worried about Eli's absence. Passing to the small corral behind the house, she noticed that his horse was missing. Mounting her own animal, she rode to the northeast and crossed the ridge. The bright yellow flowers of the compass plant and the profuse bloom of the rattlesnake weeds bedecked her course.

Once over the ridge and out of sight of her home, she made for the wooded banks of the creek, and rode upstream to the two-room cabin of the McGees. But for the chimney smoke, a stranger would not have suspected the existence of this modest habitation until almost upon it; for the high fence about the little house was hidden by hollyhocks, and the log structure itself was over-run by morning-glories. During the absence of her father and Ham on their various errands, Larkspur had paid surreptitious visits to the place.

As she was swinging to the ground,

Guthrie McGee came through the doorway, his dark face revealing the welcome in his heart.

"I was thinking about you and wishing I could see you," he eagerly began.

"I'm trying to find my young brother. Is he here?"

Her manner chilled him.

"He isn't here, Larkspur. Evan is out, but she'll be back soon. Sit down and let's talk."

"I mustn't stop. Ma's fretting about Eli. If pap or Ham finds out he comes here, they'll burn your house."

"But why should they hate us so much?" demanded McGee, his eyes narrowing.

"You're from the North," she reminded, and ancient voices were calling to her to stand up for her Yankee-hating blood.

"If you were only some one else, Larkspur!" sighed Guthrie.

"If you weren't a damn Free-Stater!" she fiercely countered.

He nodded and smiled sadly.

"Even that, if I could have been born that way," he conceded. "But why does this infernal quarrel about slaves have to come between us?" he added passionately.

"I go with my people," she replied stiffly.

"And all I ask is to go with my heart," he murmured.

His head was bowed, his gaze was on the ground, and for a moment Larkspur could study him without meeting his eyes. She felt herself weakening. It hurt her pride, for she was a Milkent.

"Free-Staters are going to be licked out of their boots," she stoutly declared, to escape the dangerous spell. "Every one knows that. Old Beecher can't send enough of his 'Bibles' down here to pull the fat out of the fire. Why don't you quit that parcel of meddlers?"

"God, Larkspur, I'd quit anything



and everything for you, if it didn't mean the loss of my self-respect; but you never could abide a man who'd lost his self-respect."

She remained silent. Guthrie jerked up his head and caught the expression of her eyes. What he believed he saw emboldened him to take one of her brown hands and earnestly tell her:

"I'd quit living to help you, Larkspur!"

"That's all?" she asked, snatching away her hand. "It's easy to say those things. You talk of self-respect. What about mine? Ain't mine as good as yours? If you want me, you must come to me—come the whole way."

He bowed his head in defeat.

"I never can be pro-slavery," he said sadly.

Furious fires raged through her small person, and she heard herself crying:

"Then the ridge 'tween your shack and ours, if it was a million miles high, couldn't be as high as what's 'tween you and me!"

She flung herself upon her horse and was galloping for home.

## II

THERE was no neutrality along the Kansas-Missouri border. Middle-of-the-roads were the helpless prey of border ruffian or jayhawker. There was no law except that of might. The Milkent girl could scarcely remember any other conditions; but she hated the bitterness of the feud as never before now that she fully realized the insurmountable barrier between her, and the little cabin surrounded by hollyhocks and festooned with morning-glories.

When she reached home, she found that her favorite brother had returned and had brought a wonderful stranger. She halted just inside the threshold and blinked her blue eyes to make sure that it was no illusion. Joel, redolent of whisky, young and reckless, and always laughing, caught her up and

smacked her loudly. During this stormy greeting she did not remove her gaze from the stranger, who was the most elegant figure that her frontier eyes had ever seen.

Joel's voice sounded far off as he said:

"This is Peter Binn, a Missouri River pilot, Larkspur. Rode up with me from Wickly Mills, down on the creek."

Without looking at her brother, the girl bobbed her head.

"You've been gambling with those poor critters of Osage Injuns, Joel, and taking what the Fort Scott gamblers overlooked," she accused.

Binn smiled and showed dazzling white teeth. Joel flushed beneath his tan, muttered an oath, and then laughed boisterously.

"Listen, kitten," he said. "Don't waste any sympathy on them Osage bucks. I've fetched back my hoss and a new friend; but them bucks are some hellions at poker."

Then the girl remembered her manners.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Binn?" she said, curtsying.

"Call me Peter, Miss Larkspur."

Ma'am Milkent finished a careful survey of the young man.

"It's ungodly the way you tog out, Mr. Binn," she told him bluntly. "Bos-tons dress like that, I s'pose."

"It's just the way of the river pilots, Mrs. Milkent."

"If Wash Gowing's outfit hears you said that, he'll have some of his lousy Free-Staters riding after Binn," declared Joel. "As a pilot, Binn gits a thousand dollars a month, ma."

"You lyin' young hound! I oughter larrup you one," said his mother good-naturedly. "A thousand dollars!"

Binn was dressed as became an autocrat of the river; but his French calf boots and pearl-gray soft hat, his coat of faultless fit, boasting a brown velvet collar, the heavy gold watch chain crossing his gay waistcoat, and

the lively plaid pattern of his trousers, demanded recognition.

"If you can git that unheard of amount of money just for steerin' a boat," inquired Ma'am Milkent, "what be you doin' down here in Linn County? You must be hidin' from somebody, or something."

"Lor, ma! You better remember he's company," suggested the girl.

Binn laughed.

"I'm hiding from some Northern men who run an insurance company," he confessed.

Joel eagerly explained.

"He took the James Hackett up above Sumner, to snag it," explained Joel. "Boats can't be insured for more'n four years, and in the third year it's mighty helpful to have them lost by snagging. They call it the 'upper cemetery.' Pete made a mistake, for, unknown to him, some of the St. Louis insurance men was on board. They was going to arrest him, and he ducked out."

"Good-by to a thousand a month!" added Binn, and he nodded and smiled at Larkspur.

"Is it honest to spoil good river boats?" asked the girl.

"Hush, you little silly!" replied Joel. "As if anything wasn't all right when you can git the best of a dirty abolitionist!"

"There's quite a number of boats up there in the cemetery, Miss Larkspur," drawled Binn. "Hello! Here's another stranger. Seems he's peddling roots and herbs."

Larkspur laughed delightedly.

"That's Eli, my brother," she cried.

"He's always fussing with flowers."

The gloomy expression of Joel's thin face, and the somber abstraction of Ma'am Milkent, warned Binn of a subject that had provoked dissension. Young Eli, whose big eyes found much to admire in the personal appearance of the stranger, remained motionless and silent for a while. Then, with much enthusiasm, he exclaimed:

"Just look at them, folks! Ever see the like? I met a man with a glass that makes a teeny speck look as big as a hazelnut. Hold it over a flower, and you see the most wonderful colors and things. I'm trying to carry the pictures in my head, so I can draw 'em."

"Rein in! Where's your manners, booby? This is Mr. Peter Binn. Reckon you didn't see him at all."

The boy, some twelve years old, colored with embarrassment.

"I was all stirred up over what that queer piece of glass lets you see," he said shyly.

"Eli Milkent, you've been foolin' with devil's works," upbraided his mother. "What 'll your pap say?"

"It's only a magnifying glass the lad's been using," said Binn. "When I get back to the river I'll send him a better one; but they show you ugly things as well as beautiful things, young man. They make monsters out of tiny bugs. You can watch dragons fighting, when you can scarcely see them with the naked eye. What kind of a looking man was this fellow?"

Eli hesitated for a moment, as if tongue-tied.

"A fine-looking man, mister," he said at length. "He has a bald head—just a ragged bit of hair from the top of his ears down. I think he's very poor. Anyway, he's not dressed up like you be."

"Asked you lots of questions about folks around here?" continued Binn, and winked knowingly at Joel.

"He asked who lived here and over the ridge," the boy slowly replied. "Then he started off like he was going down to Fort Scott."

All but Ma'am Milkent laughed at the description, and under cover of their amusement the boy stole away.

Larkspur thoughtfully studied the pilot.

"You're sound, of course?"

"Sound on the goose—yes, ma'am," replied Binn.

"Think I'd fetch him here, foolish,

if he wasn't sound?" rebuked her brother.

"Of course I know he must be; but there's Ham and pap coming home any time."

Ma'am Milkent finished placing an immense frying pan of eggs and bacon on the coals in the fireplace. She spoke gravely to the guest.

"I don't know," she said, "as Joel's told you how Ham an' his pap look at things. Pap's a just man accordin' to his lights, but Ham's more'n that. He'd turn ag'in' his own blood if he found they'd taken up with Free-Staters."

"So would pap," said Joel.

"Pap ain't like Ham," corrected Ma'am Milkent, and sighed dolorously. "I reckon it's hard for a mother to say 'bout her son, but Ham does have a cruel streak in him. Must 'a' bin a hand-down from our Carolyn kin."

"Ma's tryin' to tell you, Pete, that Ham's a cold-blooded hellion," laughed Joel.

"I respect a man who's sincere in what he believes to be right," summed up Binn. "I have nothing to fear on that point. Any sound man across the line in Westport or Mormon Fork will vouch for me."

"Good land! That oughter be good enough even to satisfy Ham," said Ma'am Milkent; "but our men ain't been that far north over the line for some time."

"Just looking around to snag old Brown," laughed Joel.

His mother, standing behind Binn, placed a finger to her lips and looked worried.

"Oh, they'll be quick enough to tell all their doin's when they pull in," said Joel. He turned and peered through the open door. "They're coming now," he added. "Ham's in one of his fretting spells."

His lips continued to smile, but his eyes were watching the two horsemen with more than speculative interest.

Larkspur made a little curtsy to

Binn and left the room to find her young brother. In a lean-to shed at the back of the house he was arranging a pretty display of wild flowers and leaves. The girl's face grew years older as she stood and watched him. There was a grip on her young heart as she contrasted his gentle pursuits with the rough manners of the times. She felt a deep pity for the boy, whose brown eyes were sparkling with rare lights as they hovered over the perfections that he saw in the colors and forms of the flowers.

She heard the harsh, flat voice of her brother Ham, somehow suggestive of a rattlesnake's warning—only Ham never gave warning. She heard her father's dull, booming tones, punctuated by Joel's high-pitched, reckless laugh. The dissonance made Eli's occupation all the more pitiable.

The boy looked up and beheld his sister. He started guiltily. His sparkling eyes were half closed, and all that the girl could think of was a wooden mask slipping over his young face. In a querulous voice he said:

"They're at it agin—always rowing!"

Larkspur darted across the dirt floor and threw an arm around his neck.

"You don't belong here, Eli," she cried passionately. "You'll never be a killer!"

The boy trembled. Larkspur released him.

"God knows why you should be what you are" she added; "set down out here in a fighting world—a butterfly among devil's darning needles!"

"I hate it!" whispered the boy.

"Pretty things in the grass and in the sky, and everywhere, but only ugliness in human critters. You started to call me a coward, Lark—oh, I know; but I ain't to blame if I hate it."

"You're all right, Eli—beautifully right. You're just out of place; or maybe it's us who are out of place."

"You ain't out of place in a pretty world, Lark. You're the prettiest

thing I ever see," he honestly told her.

She hugged him hungrily and smoothed his soft brown hair, so unlike the bristly pates of her father and brothers. Then she put her hands on his slender shoulders and held his eyes with hers.

"But you lied to us in there," she told him. "Joel has been drinking. The stranger couldn't know, but ma and I knew. That talk about a strange man with the queer glass—there's no such man!"

"It wasn't a reg'lar lie," Eli defended. "I've seen butterflies light on flowers and look so much like flowers that birds couldn't see 'em. That's what I was like."

"Where did you see the funny glass that makes teeny things look so big?"

"At the McGees' cabin," he confessed.

"There wasn't any old man, bald-headed except for a fringe of hair?"

He shook his head slowly.

"Why, you little brat! If mother finds you out she'll be mortal upset. See here, you ain't aiming to write a book?"

"If I had the l'arning, I'd write a book. I'd write about beautiful things, and about the fine castles I see in the sky. I called 'em houses, but Guthrie McGee said they was castles. I'd write about the thunderheads runnin' away when they see the rainbow. I'd—"

"Hush! Pap would take a black-snake to you if he heard. Eli, you listen—you mustn't go to the McGees again. They're Free-Staters. Put the flowers out of sight. They'll rile Ham something powerful if he sees 'em."

She kissed him hurriedly.

"You're crying, Lark," he whispered.

She passionately wiped her eyes, fought down the weakness, and returned to the house.

### III

THE men were sitting down to eat, and Larkspur helped her mother with

the victuals. Neither Ham nor his father paid any heed to the girl. Pap Milkent pounded the handle of his knife on the table and hoarsely prophesied:

"They shall be cut off, root an' branch. The Holy Writ's my authority. They shall be cut off like they never was born!"

His disordered hair and burning eyes reminded Larkspur of a picture in the only illustrated book in the house, the Bible—a weird picture of a Hebrew prophet preaching woe. Peter Binn watched the girl closely. Beside Binn sat Ham, a dour hulk of a man, whose brooding eyes were fixed on his plate.

As Larkspur joined her mother, Ham, between huge mouthfuls, said:

"They can't raise the money to enter the land. I've l'arned that much. They ain't got no right to the land, even if they could pay on the nail. I want it, an' I'm goin' to git it!"

His thick lips flapped together over his words. Binn marveled at the grotesque miracle of this wolflike man and the flower of a girl being brother and sister.

"McGee might think different," remarked Joel.

"Then I'll take over the place with two new graves for improvements," was the ferocious answer.

"Ham, you stop such bloody talk!" cried his mother. "Our comp'ny will think we're a queer parcel of critters."

"Let Ham be," boomed the father's deep bass. "Ham's right—they shall be cut off. They shall be dug up, root an' branch. There's our authority for it," the old man added, pointing to the Bible.

"What will Mr. Binn think of such talk?" wailed Mrs. Milkent.

"He can think what he likes, but he better keep a still tongue in his head," warned Ham, staring menacingly across the board at the smiling visitor.

"I never hunt for trouble, Ham," said Binn; "and I never dodge trouble



when I can't duck it. I'm not interested in Linn County land. I shan't figure in any Cygnes des Marais affair."

Ma'am Milkent, kneeling to shovel more eggs and bacon upon the big platter, dropped her spoon. Her eyes rolled as if she had caught a glimpse of hell. Recovering the spoon, she stole a glance at her daughter, and was relieved to behold only natural abhorrence of the terrible massacre to which Binn had alluded.

At first Ham's wide mouth flapped without words. Then he inquired:

"What you know 'bout that killin'?"

"All I mean," Binn replied carelessly, "is that I'm hiding down here, and minding my own business. I'm a master hand at doing that."

"Root and branch!" mumbled Pap Milkent.

"If they can raise their hundred an' twenty-five dollars, I say they should be let alone," spoke up Ma'am Milkent.

"And Judas was bought with thirty pieces of silver," snarled her husband. It was one of his rare references to the New Testament. "If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out," he continued. "If thy arm offend thee, chop it off!"

"Best way is to dispossess 'em for not paying their entry fee," suggested Joel. "Blood on land never makes good crops."

"Shut up, you young fool!" returned Ham. "They're goin' to go—feet first, if they don't heed the warnin'. I'll ride over an' tell 'em once more—just once. Pap's told 'em, but I've never seen 'em only at a distance. I'll go—and alone."

"You hurt 'em, Ham, an' you'll find me in the crick," said his mother.

"They shall have time to clear out. Then their blood's on their own head."

Near sundown Ham mounted his horse. Joel watched his brother with no laughter in his face.

The carpet of flowers was unseen by the moody horseman as he rode stirrup

deep through their beauty. After crossing the ridge he reined in to anathematize the effeminacy of the hollyhocks and morning-glories.

"The damn fools even let 'em block the winders!" he muttered.

As he rode up to the cabin, Evan McGee appeared in the doorway. She stood in a frame of honeysuckles. For a background she had a white tablecloth, a shelf of books, and muslin curtains at a window.

Ham had never seen her before, except at a distance, and her loveliness and daintiness affected him strangely. Unsuspected forces streamed like fire through his huge frame. For nearly half a minute he gaped and breathed with difficulty. He could not tell whether it was the aroma of the flowers, or the girl, that was choking him. Brutally elemental, direct as a blow of the fist, he slowly approached her, his dark, cavernous eyes blazing with new lights.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked the girl.

It was merely a rhetorical gesture. She had seen Ham's hulking figure riding through the tall grass, and her brother had described him and told her some of the man's terrible history. She always pictured him as one going out to destroy.

"I'm the man who takes over this chunk of land mighty soon. You folks have been warned once before. You folks ain't paid up. You better quit an' pull out mighty soon."

"We have a few days yet to pay up in," Evan told him defiantly.

"Where's your brother?"

"He's away."

As her thoughts reverted to the Cygnes des Marais murders, she thanked God that her brother was not present.

Ham Milkent slid from the saddle, scooped her in his arms, and kissed her. Then he threw her from him and stood panting and glaring. The perfume of her hair was mingled with the



aroma of the flowers. He had never seen a woman like her. He both hated her and desired her; and the latter weakness frightened him as nothing before had ever done.

"My brother would kill you if I told him!" she whispered, staggering to the doorway.

"You tell him, you little devil!" Ham raucously challenged. "Tell him quick, an' he'll git his eternal comeuppance!"

She clutched the door and half closed it. With staggering steps he advanced, making awkward gestures with his huge arms.

"You was sent by the devil to tempt me from my duty, damn you!" he cried.

"You *are* the devil!" she whispered.

Then she screamed, slammed the door to, and dropped the heavy bar.

Ham raised one huge fist to smash down the barrier, but slowly lowered his arm. He walked like a drunken man to his horse, and found it laborious work to climb into the saddle. He rode away with head bowed and with never a backward glance, and took a course far out over the bejeweled carpet of the prairie, that he might have time to conquer the terrific storm in his head and his heart.

#### IV

THAT evening, when Guthrie McGee returned home from the nearest trader's store, he found his sister inclined to silence. He attributed it to her loneliness. His own troubles were worrying him. He had been unable to raise the money for entering the land. The talk between the two was desultory, each trying to keep away from troublous thoughts.

Next morning both were amazed to find a hundred and twenty-five dollars in gold at the door.

"Throw it away! Bury it! Don't keep it!" pleaded Evan.

Her brother stared at the little heap

of coins in amazement. When he could speak, he demanded:

"What's the matter with you, girl? Throw away money we've prayed for? You act as if it was a rattlesnake. It's gold—enough to enter the land. Wake up!"

"It's worse—it's the devil's gold," she distractedly told him.

He took her by her slender shoulders and gently shook her.

"If there's any one in Kansas who feels friendly enough to leave money at our door, I'll gladly accept it as a loan. I'll enter the land to-day!"

"I'll go with you, but I'll never come back."

"Why, Evan, what's the matter with you? Nerves? Too lonely out here?"

"It's worse than death."

She stared with dilated eyes over his shoulder and through the open door. He threw his arm around her, drew her to him, and endeavored to learn the meaning of her wild gaze. At hazard he asked:

"Is it about Joel Milkent?"

She shook her head and began to weep piteously. Speaking awkwardly, Guthrie made his own confession.

"I love Joel's sister," he told Evan. "She would have loved me in other times and places; but she and hers are against us people from the North. Still, I mean to live here and develop this land. Can't you put your trouble behind you and help me?"

"Death would be easier, Guthrie. I'll never come back here."

"Then some one must have hurt you terribly, Evan. Some one shall answer to me for it. It's Joel Milkent! Get ready to ride—I'll come back alone and kill him!"

She lifted her head and brushed away the tears.

"Joel would never hurt me, Guthrie," she said. "He's wild and reckless, but he would do whatever I asked. Of course, he has to stand with his people. I saw how he felt, and I told

him it was impossible that there should be anything between him and me. Yes, I sent him away to be more reckless and dissipated. Leave the gold outside the door, and we'll go!"

Guthrie, dropped to the depths of despair, but believing that Evan's reason might be at stake, swept up the coins and threw them outside the door.

"Pack what you can carry on your horse," he said.

The tragedy in her soul was complete, and yet she found room for pity. Her brother's struggle to make a home had gone for nothing. Like herself, he had loved and lost; but with the thought of Ham Milkent coming again she could not tarry. Death would be better than that. All she took was a small bag of clothes. In leaving the house, she took care not to step on the gold.

She was half conscious of a dull booming sound from over the ridge. She mechanically glanced up to the sky for thunderheads before she realized that it was the sound of gunfire.

Guthrie came riding around the corner, leading her horse.

"There's shooting over toward the Milkent place," he called out. "I'll ride up the ridge to see what's the matter."

He assumed that Evan would not care to accompany him; but before he was more than halfway she was beside him.

When they came in sight of the Milkent place, at first they could make no sense of the drama they saw before them. Men were riding around the cabin. Puffs of smoke, like wads of soft cotton, suddenly appeared, and then came the dull reverberations.

"They're shooting at something!" said Evan, in a whisper, as if fearing to be overheard.

"The cabin fires back!" excitedly cried Guthrie.

He pointed, and his sister saw puffs of smoke come from the cabin windows.

"Good Heavens! There, they're coming out! They're taking the fight to the horsemen!" he exclaimed.

"Two of them!" cried the girl. "Which ones?" she added, in a whisper.

Guthrie shook his head. At the distance, the horsemen riding from the back of the cabin were but dots. The attackers, five of them, drew back, and the attacked became the pursuers. Therein they practiced poor strategy; for, when they were about a quarter of a mile from the stout log house, the five enemy horsemen began an enveloping movement, and the two Milkents found themselves riding in a ring of fire.

The girl turned her head away. Guthrie watched with suppressed breath. Several times there came the puffs of smoke, and then the dull reports. His sister heard him exclaim under his breath.

"What is it?" she faintly asked.

"One of the Milkents is shot from the saddle. He must be mortally hit. He threw up his arms when he went off his horse."

"Don't!" she pleaded. "Which one?"

"No idea. Heavens, the other one's charging them! He's using revolvers. He's potted two!"

"It's Joel! It's Joel! That's like his reckless way!"

She waited, with face averted, until the gunfire ceased. Then, very slowly, she swung her head about to stare down on the grassy arena. Three men were hoisting two inert forms on horses, and were riding away to the northwest.

Evan astounded her brother by sending her horse down the southern slope. He soon overhauled her.

"What are you doing?" he shouted.

"It's Joel! They've murdered him, and I can go to him now."

"God, Evan! I never guessed you felt like that about him!"

But she did not hear. Through the

grass, with the flowers swishing the hem of her skirt and catching in her stirrups, she made for the scene of the fighting. Her brother rode beside her, his somber gaze searching the ground ahead.

"That's Pap Milkent!" he exclaimed in a jerky voice.

Evan swung her horse aside without a glance, her gaze focused on the second still figure. Her brother swept by her and jumped to the ground.

"This one's Ham Milkent!" he cried, before touching the lifeless body.

The girl swayed and cried out incoherently. In another moment she had wheeled her horse and was riding toward the cabin. Again her brother overtook her.

"There's no hurry," she said, lessening her speed. "Joel's dead. He would have been the first to ride out to fight, if he'd been alive. Some one's coming."

"It's Ma'am Milkent. She's carrying a rifle," said Guthrie. "Now she's stopped. She's waiting for us."

Expressionless as a wooden figure, Ma'am Milkent watched them ride toward her.

"Both dead?" she asked.

Guthrie McGee bowed his head.

"Them what live by the sword shall die by the sword," she muttered.

"And Joel?" faintly asked the girl.

"He's hit in two places. He *would* show himself. Go on—I'll come back."

"Go with her, Guthrie," said Evan.

Her brother dismounted to walk beside the grim-visaged woman. Evan rode on. Larkspur, white of face, met

her at the door and flung her arms around the visitor's neck, hysterically crying:

"That Mr. Binn did it! He wasn't any pilot! He came spying for the jayhawkers. They wanted to get Ham for being mixed up in that awful Cygnes des Marais killing. Ham reckoned something was wrong when five strangers rode toward the house and Binn started to meet 'em. The fighting began right then, and Ham killed Binn. Oh, I don't care to live!"

"Is it all over?" asked a weak voice from under the table, and Eli crawled forth to hug close to his sister.

"Joel?" softly called Evan, trying to blink the sun glare from her eyes.

"Right here, Evan!" he answered from a dark corner. She dropped beside him and pressed her face against his. "Honeysuckles and hollyhocks!" he whispered contentedly. "Find the money I left at your door?"

She gave a convulsive jerk. She had believed that Ham Milkent left the gold.

"I found it, Joel. Don't talk."

"Talk? You come to me, and me not to talk?"

"Where's he hurt, Larkspur?"

"Bullet in his shoulder, and one in his leg. Ma's looked him over, and says he'll pull through. Ma knows!"

"Nothing can kill me now you've come, sweetheart! From now on I'm out of this fighting. I'd almost be an abolitionist for your sake. Pap and Ham must have put up a hell of fight. Ma said they got two besides that sneaking spy of a Pete Binn!"

**COMING—Serialized exclusively  
in MUNSEY. Another best seller,  
by HOMER CROY, author of  
"West of the Water Tower"**

# The Blue Devil's Button



*Lieutenant Horace Finkle, alias Horses, performs a notable exploit and suffers a sad disappointment*

By Charles Winfield Fessier



IN his youth Captain Lewis had often heard the saying that it is to a person's advantage to try, try again in case he fails to accomplish something or other at the initial attempt. That officer, however, had later decided from experience that if a man fails the first time in certain things, he's a sucker if he bats his head twice against the same stone wall.

That's the way he felt about Lieutenant Horace Finkle, who blushing denied the rumor that he was the thickest-skulled and worst flyer in the entire A. E. F.

In order to make a good war pilot

out of Lieutenant Finkle, Captain Lewis had early decided that first he would have to teach the sandy-haired, freckled-faced young man to approximate the process of thinking. The captain had tried this task once, and he refused to try again, ancient proverbs notwithstanding.

For instance, Captain Lewis had carefully explained to Lieutenant Finkle the total impossibility of that young man's winning the war all by himself. The captain had politely but firmly instructed the ardent youth never to leave battle formation in pursuit of ten German planes, or even one German plane. He pointed out that the lieutenant hadn't the slightest



chance of bagging ten German planes, never having displayed marksmanship enough to hit a barn, in case a barn should decide to fly. For the same reason he hadn't the slightest chance of hitting even one German plane.

All this, however, was wasted words and effort to Horace—who had long since been dubbed "Horses" by his companions, and who may as well be called by that name hereafter. In aerial combat the young man was prone to be carried away by his own enthusiasm, and to forget official instruction. In the heat of battle he would leave his squadron and go dashing through the air after two, three, or more enemy planes that seemed to be getting away. Usually he limped back to the field with a sorely damaged machine.

The war was at a critical stage. The enemy was weakening, but he still fought with savage fury. Captain Lewis's flight had many things to keep it busy, and did much to refute the theory that most aviators divided their time between champagne and Charmaine. Horses did his share—or at least he tried hard to do it. He manfully went forth to give battle to the enemy, and made belated returns, to listen to acrimonious lectures from Captain Lewis anent his stupidity and his unfitness for any other part in the war but the currying of wounded mules.

The following is a conversation that took place between Captain Lewis and Horses immediately after the lieutenant's return from a flight:

"Didn't I see you on the tail of an enemy ship in excellent position to bring him down?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it not a fact that you allowed him to escape, and that shortly thereafter he raised particular hell with me while I was occupied with another enemy plane?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you not then leave the flight

and go chasing off on some damfool errand in defiance of orders?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"I saw a German observation balloon."

"Did you get it?"

"No, sir."

"Why?"

"It was a French balloon."

"Oh, Lord! And I heard you only this morning entertaining the boys by blowing off at the mouth about your intention to do awful things to the Blue Devil!"

Silence.

"Didn't I?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any idea that you can defeat one of the best flyers in the German army, a man who has twenty Allied planes to his credit, when you lack the sense to hit anything whatsoever in the air, and when your flying is such that you can't even get into position to use your machine gun?"

"Yes, sir."

"One more crack like that and I'll either have you transferred to the prison camp for life or have you shot!"

"Yes, sir."

"Shut up!"

"Yes, sir."

The captain stalked off, grumbling about his inability to win a war when the government allowed half-wits to get into the army, and then refuse to give captains the privilege of shooting them.

Horses saluted in the direction of the departing officer. His thumb was against his nose and the fingers were extended.

"I guess I can get the Blue Devil as well as the next fellow," he informed himself. "I haven't had a break yet, but when it comes I'll show that banana there!"

## II

THE lieutenant sought the company of Clarke Donnel and Pewee McGow-

an. These men he envied, on the score that each had knocked three enemy planes out of the blue. Horses did not admit that they were better flyers than he, but he did envy their luck. On their side, the two successful flyers had a real affection for Horses, although they secretly shared Captain Lewis's opinion of his mental caliber.

It was not business hours, and the three went to the near-by French village. They ambled about aimlessly for a while, and then turned toward a certain café, where they found a blue-eyed, brown-haired, and very attractive creature occupied in the business of sobbing. It was Marie Chauran, the French girl whom each of the three firmly intended to cart back to the United States.

Marie was more than a ray of light in the dark pall of a rather annoying war. She was a beacon, and for a month three khaki-clad moths had been endeavoring to get scorched in her glowing radiance. Now she was sobbing bitterly, but in a charming manner.

Pewee approached, hat in hand.

"Aw, what the hell's a matter, kid?" he inquired, in a tone intended to be one of tenderness.

Clarke nudged his friend viciously.

"How come alla waterworks?" he contributed.

To Horses the latter remark fell short as a proper expression of compassion.

"Did some one," he asked gently, "break your dolly?"

Such an exhibition of sympathy unnerved Marie, and her brown curls were agitated by a fresh burst of sobbing. Finally she controlled her grief so that she could speak.

"Pierre—Pierre ees gone," she said.

Pewee wanted to know if the gentleman named had taken up with a blonde, and what of it?

"He ees what you call my switheart, and now he ees keel," the girl sobbed,

and deep grief clouded the sunny blue of her eyes.

"Who killed him?" inquired Clarke.

"He was fight weeth ze flying mans you call ze Blue Devil, and he was keel entirely dead."

"The dirty son of a gun!" exploded Pewee.

"He ought to be shot," asserted Clarke.

To Horses this seemed the proper time to do something. To date he had been an "also ran" in the race for Marie's affections, and he was becoming tired of the situation.

"I," he asserted sternly, "will bring you a button off the uniform of the Blue Devil!"

Marie almost smiled.

"Weel you?" she inquired pleadingly, anxiously.

"I said so," answered Horses in a grieved tone. "My word's my bond. Of course I will!"

Marie did smile.

"Oo-oo-oo!" she gasped. "You shall almos' take ze place of my poor Pierre!"

Thus encouraged, Horses stepped forward and kissed her ruby lips—whereat he was soundly slapped.

By the time the trio was outside, the vinegar of jealousy had soured the naturally sweet dispositions of two of the three aviators.

"You fat-headed sap, promising that poor kid all that hooley!" remarked Pewee.

"Yes, you big bag of wind!" supplemented Clarke. "A button off the Blue Devil's uniform, indeed! In the first place you couldn't hit him if he flew a battleship, and in the second place how would you get the button if you did?"

Horses hadn't thought of that detail, but he maintained a bold front.

"A Finkle always keeps his word," he said sternly.

"Phooey for the Finkles!" remarked Pewee. "The only way you'll ever get a button off the Blue Devil's

uniform would be to get the address of his tailor!"

"Blah!" remarked Horses with dignity, and the three walked back in utter silence.

Next afternoon the battle planes were ordered out for a reconnaissance over the lines. Horses was piloting one of them, mainly owing to the fact that Captain Lewis had forgotten his determination to order the lieutenant to stay on the field.

Flying in V formation, the squadron headed past the Allied lines and went roaring over no man's land. It seemed that the German aviation corps must have called it a holiday, for there was not a hostile plane in the sky, so far as the American flyers could see.

All was peaceful for a while, and then, suddenly, the skies above rained German planes and machine gun bullets. A German flight had dived down from the shelter of a cloud bank.

There was much activity on the part of the surprised American planes. Some dived, others looped, and there were a few Immelmans. It was a dog fight, and promised to be something above the ordinary.

There were more enemy machines than those carrying the red, white, and blue insignia. In the first furious attack one American plane was shot down out of control. Horses watched it with a shudder as it spun toward the earth. He vaguely wondered what a flyer was supposed to do in a case like this.

He maneuvered for position, and watched with a thrill of exultation as Pewee McGowan suddenly dived on the tail of an enemy ship, his machine gun spitting death. The German plane wavered, then plunged downward in flames. A bullet had struck its fuel tank.

Planes roared and darted about the lieutenant's line of vision. One came at him from above, but he had presence of mind enough to dive, gain flying

speed, and loop upward again, eluding the attacker.

Then Horses discovered that there was a German plane beneath him, engaged in the business of pumping bullets into an American ship. He gripped the handle of his machine gun and pushed forward on the stick. He dived at terrific speed straight at the enemy plane. It was an ideal opportunity for aerial combat, for Horses was above and behind the German and in position to pepper him unmercifully. All things were in the lieutenant's favor except one—his machine gun had jammed, and he was as much of a menace to the enemy as a sparrow hawk.

With a curse that sounded above the roar of the motors, Horses pulled his plane up and flew aside, to work feverishly upon his impotent weapon. It finally responded to his touch, and he again dived into the dog fight.

Two more German planes were sent to earth in the mêlée, and the enemy seemed to have had enough of fighting for one day. They headed homeward, diving and twisting to elude their pursuers. From far above another machine dived to join the retreating flight—a red plane with a blue devil painted on each wing.

As was done by many famous aces of the World War, it was the Blue Devil's custom to remain above his flying circus while his followers engaged the enemy in combat. Then he would dive down unexpectedly and add one or two victims to his growing list. It was another form of pot hunting, and to Horses it seemed as unethereal as shooting quail on the ground.

"That's the Kraut that killed Marie's Pierre," he muttered.

He gave his plane the gun and speeded toward the retreating enemy. He had more altitude than they, and gained distance rapidly in a diving, slanting plunge. He was near enough to use his gun now. He pressed the trigger, and the throb of bullets answered. None of the pellets seemed to

do damage, but they did serve to warn the enemy of pursuit.

Several planes circled and came at Horseshoes, who realized that his comrades had gone home, and that he was alone with an unpleasant number of Germans. He thought desperately of retreat, but found that it was impossible. He was hemmed in above, below, and on either side by a cordon of roaring, death-spitting planes.

He decided to sell his life dearly, and pressed the machine gun trigger, but found that it had jammed again. From above the Blue Devil dived, and bullets ripped through the fuselage of the American plane, snarling and vicious. It refused to answer the controls, and began spinning swiftly downward. Horseshoes pulled back desperately on the stick, but nothing happened. The earth was rushing up to meet him. He saw a number of buildings marked with black crosses, and again pulled back on the stick, kicking the left rudder savagely. There came a splintering crash, and darkness.

### III

THINGS were quiet about the landing field. Captain Lewis sat in his office and cursed bitterly at the loss of two more flyers. Of course, Lieutenant Finkle wasn't much of a loss, but—

His reflections were interrupted by the roar of a motor, and the captain stepped outside in time to see a large plane land. He walked toward it, and a grotesque figure emerged from the rear cockpit. It was tattered and bloody, but it was grinning. The grin was the clew. Captain Lewis realized that Lieutenant Finkle stood before him.

"You were reported shot down over enemy territory," the officer accused.

"Yes, sir," replied Horseshoes, grinning.

"How did you get back?"

"I flew."

"But your plane crashed, didn't it?"

"Yes, but this isn't my plane."

Captain Lewis noted the German cross painted on the wings and fuselage of the plane.

"How in thunder—what—why?" he spluttered.

"Well, you see, it was this way," Horseshoes began.

"Yes?"

"I was chasing the Blue Devil. Then I noticed that I was all alone."

"You disobeyed orders again!"

"I know it, but I was in a crack then. The Krauts had me in a pickle for sure, and the Blue Devil dived down on me and busted into my plane. I went down, and I thought I was a goner; but just before I cracked up I straightened my plane out a little, and I wasn't hurt much. Just knocked cold for a while."

"Well?"

"Next thing I knew the Germans were pulling me out of my plane. I had lit plumb in the center of their flying field. They were all talking, but I couldn't understand them. Germans have a funny lingo. Then the Blue Devil came along and started talking good United States. He wanted to know my outfit, and a lot more things."

"How did you know it was the Blue Devil?"

"He told me so. He was proud of it, and he wanted to put me in his list of victims."

"Go on. What happened then?"

"Well, there was a lot of noise on the field near us. A German bomber crashed in the take-off and started burning. All the men around me ran to the plane to help the pilots—all except the Blue Devil. He stayed to get some more dope for his record book."

"Yes?"

"Well, there was another bomber near us. Its prop was spinning, but the pilot had high-tailed it over to the wreck. The Blue Devil dropped his pencil, and stooped to pick it up. His pistol was sticking out of his holster,



and I grabbed it. I bumped it on his head and scared him into keeping his mouth shut. Then I got into the plane and started off. They shot at me, but it was dark and they couldn't see worth a darn."

"And so you stole a German bomber?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll be damned."

"Yes, sir, but what shall I do with Herr Klotz?"

"Who is Herr Klotz, for the love of Mike?"

"The Blue Devil, sir."

"Well, what about him?"

"I got him in the plane there. I made him come with me."

The captain reiterated his willingness to be damned. Walking over to the front cockpit, he ordered the occupant to come down. A small man with a discouraged look and a muddy mustache answered.

"So this is the terrible Blue Devil!" the captain marveled. "Hell, he's only a runt! Come with me."

"Wait a minute, sir!" Horses cried.

He took a small knife from his flying jacket and approached the captive, who shrank back in fear.

"I won't hurt you," Horses promised.

Horses unbuttoned the German's flying togs and sawed industriously at something. Finally he held a button in his hand.

"I wanted this for something," he explained.

"I'm going to question the prisoner," stated Captain Lewis. "After that I want to see you. I'm going either to recommend you for some kind of a decoration or have you shot for disobedience of orders, I don't know which."

Horses dashed to the barracks, where he spent fifteen minutes in explaining to Pewee and Clarke that he really wasn't dead. Then he told of the capture of the Blue Devil. Dramatically he held forth his hand and

disclosed the button that he had taken from the gray uniform.

"And I didn't get it from his tailor, either," he asserted.

"We apologize," declared Pewee. "Clarke and I didn't think you'd ever make good, but you did it. You're a hero, I guess, or else a damn fool. Anyway, Marie is yours. You deserve it."

The three marched into the village and sought out the dingy café. Inside Marie sat chatting gayly with a small man dressed in the uniform of a French lieutenant of infantry.

Horses walked up to the table.

"Here it is," he said impressively, and displayed the button.

"What ees?" inquired Marie pleasantly.

"That," replied Horses, "is a button from the uniform of the Blue Devil who killed Pierre."

"Yes," said Clarke nobly. "He captured the Blue Devil."

"All by himself," added Pewee, who was also possessed of an unselfish heart.

"Oo-oo-oo!" squealed Marie, and her blue eyes sparkled as her brown curls tumbled about in glorious confusion.

The man beside her raised his eyes interrogatively. Marie turned to him and chatted excitedly.

Horses felt that something had gone wrong. Here he should have had a pretty girl draped about his neck, and instead she was talking at great length to a foreigner.

"Who," inquired Horses sternly, "is that funny-looking little gink?"

Marie smiled sunnily.

"He ees my 'usban'," she said.

Horses recoiled.

"What—what about Pierre?" he gasped.

"Oo-oo-oo!" smiled Marie. "He jus' my switheart."

Three aviators went back to barracks very late that night, and a rumor is bruited about that they walked very unsteadily.

# "The Win=nah!"

*Joe Humphreys, world famous announcer, speaks  
of game prize fight champions and the high,  
clean courage of Charles A. Lindbergh*

By Edwin C. Hill

*Portrait Drawings by Rafael*



HE gong clangs in Cauliflower House—new Madison Square Garden. Within the ropes of the ring, as the voice of the mob rises, two youths—one like a panther, one like a bear—duck their bullet heads, and energetically shake hands with themselves in acknowledgment of the crowd's attention.

In the middle of the ring a thickset, bald person, well along in years, but as agile as a terrier, shoots his two arms straight upward, palms outward. He pivots to the four cardinal points of the compass, and at each point sweeps his palms down in a soothing and benedictory gesture.

The voice of the mob rises and falls in waves. The spectators are razzing the bald gentleman, decorating him with the Order of the Wild Raspberry, daring him to make them shut up. They gird at him. They flee at him. They hoot colorful comment on the cut of his coat. They invite him to wipe off his chin. The tumult is the smash and roar of Atlantic combers on the Jersey Coast in midwinter gales.

With tolerant smile and benevolent gaze the gentleman continues to turn on a dime, arms rising and falling, a revolving pillar of composure upon which all of that uproar breaks in fu-

tile foam. For he knows the mob. They must have their fun, and razzing him is merely the overture to the whole oratorio of Biff-Bang.

Presently the gale dwindles to nothing. The sturdy figure with the shiny poll sweeps the massed oval of eighteen thousand fight fans once more, then opens wide a mouth that was made to let out sound. From that mouth rushes a bellow that beats to silence the last echoes of turbulence. It does more than that.

At those horrendous bellows little birds, gone to bye-bye in the trees of peaceful New Jersey, are jarred from the limbs, the Woolworth Building sways two feet out of plumb, the seismograph in the Weather Bureau at Washington does a buck dance, and in all the radio lanes from New York to San Diego there is a heterodyne howl of sheer envy.

It is, of course, Mr. Joe "B'Gee" Humphreys, premier announcer of the human race, informing his public as to the names, weights, and other pertinent facts having to do with the two thick-eared youths about to mix it in the squared circle.

Joe B'Gee—or Joe the Beaut, as Alfred E. Smith dubbed him more than forty years ago when both were young fellows around Fulton Fish Market—

has been mastering fight mobs and making all nature quiver for upward of those forty years. In this day, and in his field, and in a world so rapidly becoming standardized, there is nobody like him.

He is the *ne plus ultra* of fight announcers, than which there is simply nothing than whicher. He bridges the sweep of years from the great John L. to Gene the Scholar, and with only two or three exceptions he has bellowed the pedigrees of the fighters and the conditions of the fight in every championship bout of more than a generation. Since radio came in the whole United States has heard him, from Manhattan to Monterey.

"Yeah," says Mr. Humphreys, sitting one day recently in the office of the late Tex Rickard in the Garden. "Yeah, fella, I've seen 'em come and seen 'em go—the old maulers and the new—the whole cockeyed parade. B'gee, I have! Not countin' the radio of recent years, I've announced to fifty million people in fifteen thousand fights. If you've got a few minutes I'll tell you about the five introductions and announcements that stick out in my mind above all the others. B'gee, them was the goods, them five! Get your pencil out, fella, and wiggle it.

"You remember when Big Jess Willard stood off Frank Moran and Frank's 'Mary Ann,' as Frank called his right swing? Yeah? That was back in March, 1916, and a pretty bum fight. But the big moment didn't have nothin' to do with Willard or Moran. All the old ex-champs of the heavy-weight class were at the ring side that night at Tex's invitation, and I trotted out Gentleman Jim Corbett and then Lanky Bob Fitzsimmons. They got a big hand; but, man, how they woke up when an old white-haired man, as big around as a barrel of beer, but still upright and sturdy and powerful, and with a face like a lion, climbed into the ring.

"John L. Sullivan! 'At's who it

was! You could feel the vibration from the humming arc lights over the ring when the old champ raised his dukes and took his bow—his last bow. I'm tellin' you, fella, that there were a lot of hard-boiled guys around the ring who sniffled like kids when old John threw his shoulders back, squared off and shadow-boxed. When I lifted his gnarled old hand and held it high and shouted, 'The noblest Roman of them all'—well, you'd 'a' thought the roof was comin' off.

"That was the real thing in the good old drama stuff, but in another one of the introductions there was comedy. Arthur Pelky and Sailor White were about to come on and do their stuff, and I was stallin' the crowd along in the old Garden when the biggest guy I'd ever seen climbs up into the ring and looks down at me hopefully. He didn't mean nothin' to me, this big galoot, and while I was lookin' him over and gettin' ready to yell down to Dick Butler to take his longshoreman out of there and sober him up, the mob began to ride him. 'Throw the big bum out on his ear, Joe,' they hollered. 'Who's the big palook, Joe?' and cracks like that—you know the stuff.

"The big guy, with his head way up among the electrics and takin' up enough room in the ring for two men, was smilin' pleasantly all through the razzin'. Finally he says, 'Fella, I want to be introduced.' I says, 'Who the hell are you?' And he says, 'I'm Jess Willard, the Oklahoma cow-puncher.' 'Well, where you want an introduction is over in the stockyards,' I says, but I give him his knockdown to the mob at that. It was the first time I ever see Big Jess. Funny feller, he was. Couldn't fight much. Just too big for the ordinary mauler to flatten until the Manassas Man came along.

## II

"You know a guy gets hunches when you been around the fight game long enough. One night there was

some bouts over in the old Rink A. C. in Brooklyn, and I was kiddin' the mob along in some pretty sour fights when John Reisler—John the Barber—climbs into the ring. 'Joe,' he says, 'I want you to do me a favor. I got a young feller here that needs a little publicity. Maybe he ain't goin' nowhere much, but you never can tell. Give him a knock-down to the fans, will yuh?'

"He motions to a black-haired kid—this was back around 1917 or maybe 1918—a good-lookin' kid with a nice smile and white teeth, and the kid climbs into the ring. I looks him over and likes the set up. He walks like a panther, this fella, and I got a hunch right then and there that he had sumpin' in him. 'What's your name, fella?' I asks. He tells

me, and what he says gives me another hunch. Back along the years I had known one of the greatest fighting men who ever stepped into the squared circle, Jack Dempsey, the Nonpareil, middleweight champion of the world, so with this hunch in me mind I steps to the front, gets the ears of the mob and lets 'em have it.

"'Wish to announce,' I bawls. 'Wish to announce the next heavy-weight champion of the world—Jack Dempsey!'

"That was pickin' 'em, I'll tell the world, for a few months later this smiling young guy with the white teeth sprang into the ring at Toledo and

massacred Big Jess Willard—just massacred him.

"The fourth introduction I'll always remember, took place over in Jersey, in the ring at Boyle's Thirty Acres, with ninety thousand people in Rickard's big wooden bowl. Dempsey

was the champ, and Tex had imported the French soldier and champion boxer, Georges Carpentier, after the biggest publicity ballyhoo the fight game had ever known. The boys had played on every string to pep up the public on that battle. Dempsey, the Tiger Man, against the Orchid Man of *La Belle France*—all that stuff. Dempsey, the killer, Carpentier, the rapier—battleax against sword. You couldn't beat it.

"When the Frenchman, white and nervous, trotted down an aisle and climbed through the ropes to his corner, the crowd gave him all they had in the way of cheers—a wonderful reception. Then, when Dempsey showed up, with black whiskers stickin' out of his mug like pin feathers, scowlin' like an insulted bull terrier, the crowd kinda razzed him. A lotta people booed. That didn't make no hit with me, and I felt kinda bad about it. It ought to be America first, even in the ring. It was up to me, as announcer, to kinda even things up.

"When the time came, and I got the attention of that ninety thousand, I brought Georges, slim as a girl al-



JOE HUMPHREYS

Inimitable announcer of ring events, whose voice is heard around the world by radio



most, to the center of the ring, and I told 'em about him. I says:

"'Ladeez and gen'l'men, the premier heavyweight of the Old World, the idol of his people and a soldier of France!—Georges Carpentier!"

"That hit 'em where they lived, and over in Manhattan they must have heard the roar that went up when Carpentier took his bow and flashed back to his corner to sit and stare at the lowering, sullen Dempsey. Then I led Jack forward, determined to get a good break for him, and I bawls:

"'Ladeez and gen'l'men, the champion of all champions, the man whom every red-blooded American pins his faith to—Jack Dempsey!"

"Well, that time they let out a real roar of welcome, and Jack smiled a little. The roses that had been tossed at Carpentier and the asparagus that had been hung on Dempsey had made Jack kinda sore, but he felt better after the introduction and the big cheer. It was a great moment, that—one of the greatest pictures the ring ever saw.

"Now here's the fifth time, and a different yarn entirely. You remember when Jack Sharkey mixed it up with Jimmy Maloney at the Yankee Stadium the night of May 20, 1927? Yeah? Well, do you remember what else was goin' on that night? All right, I'll wise you up in a moment. There was fifty thousand people in the stadium that night, and their minds weren't all on the fights by a long shot. Nobody knew that better than me, so along about 9.45 P.M., I steps over to the reporters and telegraph operators and buzzes 'em, and they buzz me back, and then an operator does his stuff with his telegraph bug, and pretty soon they hand me a slip of paper with a line or two written on it. I get that line in me head—solid—and then I goes to the center of the ring and gets the mob quiet after a while. And here is what I read 'em from the slip:

"'Captain Charles Lindbergh is now three hundred miles out to sea and

all is well!"

"There's no use tryin' to describe the racket that rocked the place after they got that message parked in their beans. I never heard such yellin' anywhere, anytime. People were beating each other over the head with folded newspapers, throwin' hats up in the air, doin' crazy dances, laughin' and cryin'. They eased off after a few minutes, and I went to the middle again and I says:

"'I ask you all, lovers of sport, now and at this time, to rise in silence and offer up a silent prayer for the safety of our great little aviator, the American peace envoy, Charles Lindbergh, and may the Almighty God guide him safe to his destination, the heart of our dearest allied country, France!"

"Up they got to their feet, the whole fifty thousand—except one guy. He was a Polack up in a second tier box, and he kept yellin' and shriekin' and dancin' around for Jack Sharkey. Two or three ushers tried to quiet him as the silent prayer began, but they couldn't do a thing with the nut.

"Finally a girl grabbed a cane and hit him right on the head with it. That knocked him off his chair and back into the box. Her name was Mary Hogan. You know what was the matter with the poor simp? He didn't understand English very well, and he thought all the cheerin' was for another Polack, Jack Sharkey.

"No, I never saw nothin' like that sight, fifty thousand people up on their hind legs, so quiet you could 'a' heard a pin drop anywhere in the stadium, their lips just movin'—all prayin' that young Lindbergh would make it. I ain't much of a poet, but you don't get many moments like that in the whole run of the human race—not many, fella, not many."

### III

A UNIFORMED messenger trotted into the office to summon Mr. Humphreys to his customary toil. The mob

was assembled, waiting for their preliminary sport of razzing the world's most famous announcer.

"Chase yourself, kid," said Joe B'Gee. "There's ten minutes yet before I have to go on.

"You was askin' me who was the greatest fighter, takin' one thing with another, that I ever saw. I pick Terry McGovern. When he was right, and considerin' his size, he was John L., Dempsey, Tunney, Abe Attell, Benny Leonard and Freddy Welsh rolled into one piece. He could lick everybody but one boy, Young Corbett, whose legal name was Willie Rothwell. Willie had the Indian sign on him from the start—knocked him out twice—yet Terrible Terry flattened a lot of boys who could lick Young Corbett with one hand tied behind them. Them things is funny. Don't ask me!

"The greatest heavyweights I have ever known in my forty years' connection with the fight game have been John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett, Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. John L. was a character never to be reproduced. Not even Dempsey has had the hold on the public that old John had to his dyin' day.

"Jim Corbett probably did more for boxin' than any fighter in its history. He showed the public that a guy didn't have to be a roughneck. He brought thousands of people into the sport who had turned their noses up at boxin'. Dempsey has been the most colorful and, except for old John, the most popular. At his best he was probably the hardest hitter the game ever knew.

"Tunney, to my mind, is a misunderstood guy. There's no cleaner boy in any sport. Gene doesn't know what cheatin' means. And as a punishin' fighter, I think he was the greatest of the heavyweights—a cold, efficient machine.

"The greatest heavyweight fight I ever saw, though, was back in 1898, when Gus Ruhlin and Peter Maher mixed it up—just one knockdown

after another, then get up and take it again. Speaking of Peter Maher, I'll never forget the second time he fought Kid McCoy. McCoy had flattened him like a rug years before, because he had kept old Peter waitin' in a cold ring for three-quarters of an hour, so that Peter's muscles got chilled and stiff. In the second fight McCoy, who was the trickiest and slipperiest fighter that ever put on the mitts, started talkin' right after the bell rang.

"Don'tcha hit me too hard, Peter," he kept sayin'. 'I'm not as young as I was, and can't take it like in the old days. Pull 'em a little, fella, pull 'em a little.' Maher was kind of a soft-hearted gink, and he fell for McCoy's stuff. Pretty soon the Kid let go a right swing that contained everything he had, and it landed right on the button. Maher didn't even go down, but the Kid knew then and there that he had to think fast, so he kidded Peter into believin' that it was an accident.

"The Irishman swallowed that one, too, and the second time McCoy swung with all his force Peter went to his hands and knees. He tried to stand up, but he couldn't make it, and all the time he was sayin' over and over again, 'Tis a dirty shame! 'Tis a dirty cr-rime! Oh, it's a mortal sin, it is! The deceitful divvle! The double crossin' hound!' Then the referee counted him out and McCoy beat it in a hurry.

"The cleverest fight I ever saw was between Jim Driscoll and Abe Attell, in the old Twenty-Fourth Street Club, twenty-seven years ago. They were just a pair of ghosts, them guys. The greatest fight of any kind was between Kid Lavigne and Joe Walcott, colored welter, fifteen rounds of toe-to-toe punchin', which the white boy won, at Maspeth, Long Island, thirty-five years ago. Thirty-five years ago!

"Yeah, I've seen some funny ones pulled, fella. Did I ever tell you about the time Bob Fitzsimmons knocked himself out with a lamb stew? No,

I'm not goofy. That was an honest to goodness happenin'. Because of a lamb stew a championship of the world slipped right out of Freckled Bob's bunged up fingers. If there was any dish in the world that the old kangaroo liked better than another, it was a stew of lamb seasoned with curry, and his wife, Martin Julian's sister—Martin being Fitz's manager—certainly knew how to sling a stew. Boy, I'd say she threw a mean stew!

"Less than three days before the champion was due to go up against burly Jim Jeffries, the contender, at Coney Island—this was in July, thirty years ago—1899—he threw a big party at his house, invitin' a bunch of his pals that Mrs. Fitzsimmons didn't care much about, and without tippin' her off that they were comin'. Well, we've all been married, and you know how a woman froths at the mouth at that sort of thing. But she held in all right. It was her sister Theo, who had a pretty sharp tongue when she got mad, who let out.

"They all sat down to the chow, and there was a heapin' platter of lamb stew smokin' in the center of the table. Fitz's pals, Yank Kenny, Dan Hickey, Ernest Roeber, the old wrestler, and others, were lickin' their chops, and Theo Julian was givin' Bob dirty looks. If Fitz had kept still maybe nothin' much would have happened, but he was moved to get up and shoot off his mouth. He made a long talk about how wonderful his wife was, and what a grand cook she was, and what a treat the boys had in store for them when they took a high dive into that stew.

"This was too much for Theo. She had been gettin' more and more impatient, and finally she couldn't hold in any longer. She busted up Bob's speech and lit in to him all spraddled out. What she didn't call him and his gang wasn't in the dictionary, that's all. That girl had a knack for pickin' words, I'm here to tell you, and she

just flayed Bob, just flayed him.

"He was kinda stunned at first—you know, sort of coo-coo. Then he got his mad up, and when Bob Fitzsimmons got mad it was time to walk gently. His face got as red as a beet, and he began to stutter in cockney, and then he picked the great platter full of lamb stew up in his two hands and dashed it down upon the table. The air was full of lamb and curry and broken china and bad language for the next five minutes, and, believe me, the gang took it on the run. Between Bob and Theo, they knew that safety first meant outside.

"Bob followed them, still in a wild rage, and zowie! Away went the good effects of weeks of careful trainin'. Fitz went on a mad tear, and if you remember what he could do when he got goin', you know what that meant. A few hours before the fight, Martin Julian found him, and persuaded him to get ready, but when the champ stepped into the ring to face the lumbering Jeffries, he was not the Fitzsimmons he had been three days ago. He was shaky, and his judgment was off. The bearlike boilermaker from California hit him time after time when he shouldn't have landed a blow. The crown changed hands—and all because of that lamb stew just as sure as I'm an Irishman!

#### IV

"SAY, did I ever tell you about that fight that Sailor White and Arthur Pelky had in the old Garden? You remember Arthur Pelky. He was the unlucky palooka who hit poor Luther McCarthy, causing Luther's death—and that boy might have been a champ in time to come! Well, anyway, these bums were maulin' each other around in the Garden ring, the Sailor and Pelky, slow and uninterestin'. Earlier in the evenin' the skylights had been open, but a heavy rain storm came up and they had to be closed. When the downpour started some of the boys in

the ring side seats hoisted umbrellas. The two kept wrestlin' and clinchin' and stallin' around the ring, and finally some guy piped up out of the crowd: 'Hey, Joe, open up the skylights again and drown them two bums!'

"After the final gong put an end to the bout the fans got noisy. They started to hand wreaths of the wild raspberry all over Sailor and Arthur until I stopped 'em with an announcement. I says: 'Laddeez and gen'lmen! We-e-esh to announce that Sailor White and Arthur Pelky have been rematched—then they razzed me—but not

here—they cheered at that—down at Barren Island. The first rainy night they will fight in front of a phonograph!" A fight crowd is funny. It's full of what you word slingers call—you know what I mean—psy—psy—psychology. One moment they are like roarin' lions, the next they are as nice as turtle doves.

"The one thing a fight crowd won't stand for I have learned in my experience is bein' gypped by a bum performance, or bein' made a monkey of by a couple of boys who oughta be givin' dancin' lessons rather than tradin' punches. The guy who gives his best in the ring is always solid with the crowd. He may be dumb and all that, but if he wades right in, willin' to take it if he can hand out a few, the crowd is with him. The crowd is always for a puncher, rather than a boxer. That explains the popularity of John L. in the old days, and the tremendous popularity of Jack Dempsey now. It ex-



plains why Tunney ain't so popular. Tunney can hit, of course, but he's much more the boxer. He's like a collicie dog in a fight with an airedale. He's a slasher.

"Here's one that's never been in print. Did you ever hear how Terry McGovern reversed the verdict on Young Corbett? You know Young Corbett knocked Terry out twice, bein' the only boy who ever made much headway with the Terrible Little Turk. But the day came when Terry flattened Young Corbett, though it never went into the records. I had both boys under my management at the time, twenty-three years ago, and we were swingin' around the burlesque wheel, giving exhibitions.

"One night I made a speech to the crowd, explainin' that it was the anniversary of Young Corbett's first win over Terry, and that in their bout which was about to take place, James J. Corbett would referee. The crowd



yelled, and the boys stepped into the ring. They were both feeling a little kittenish, having celebrated some, and Young Corbett was a natural born kidder anyway. As a matter of fact, he had actually kidded himself into the championship, because it was the way he talked to Terry in both their fights that made the little Irishman so wild with rage that he lost his good judgment.

"So Young Corbett says to Terry: 'You know what this night is, don't you?' Terry gave him a dirty look, but didn't say anything. 'It's the night I tickled you under the chin and took your championship away from you,' Young Corbett went on. Terry never did have much of a sense of humor, and was always a poor subject for kiddin'. As quick as a flash he hauled off with the old right and knocked Mr. Willie Rothwell—Young Corbett, cold as a fish.

"The crowd went wild. It was a great treat to see the verdict reversed. There was the champion flat on his back, and the ex-champion standing over him with eyes like an angry tiger. It wasn't such a treat to me. I felt ashamed of Terry. The only alibi I could think of for the champion was to yell for the stage carpenter to come out with a hammer and nail down the loose board that Young Corbett had tripped over.

"The carpenter came out and stood there like a dummy, me bawlin' him out all the time for his dumbness in leavin' a loose board for fellers to trip over. The poor guy looked at me kind of sorrowful, not knowin' what it was all about, and I didn't have time to tell him. Finally I grabbed the hammer myself and pounded on the perfectly good board until I was sure that Young Corbett had come back to life. Terry came over then, ashamed and sorry. 'Joe,' he says; 'Joe, tell him to come over here and sock me a good hard one in the next round—right on the button.' But I didn't, though.

Them boys was always dynamite when they were together.

## V

"THE thing that has me pop-eyed is the dough the fighters draw down nowadays. Ten thousand dollars apiece for a couple of ordinary push-overs doing their stuff. Twenty thousand for a third-rate heavy in one of those funny elimination contests. And million-dollar purses!

"One night about thirty years ago Jim Watts, a colored pug from Louisville, was matched with Tommy West, a light heavyweight. The fight was held in a dance pavilion down in Long Island, and on a bitter cold night. There wasn't six hundred dollars in the house, and the two fighters demanded their guarantee, five hundred dollars, before they would consent to put on a glove.

"Jim Watts, like Jack Johnson later on, had a large mouthful of glittering golden teeth, and in the course of the bout West gave him an awful sock right in the midst of this chinaware and jewelry. Golden molars flew all over the place, and while Jim Watts's handlers were trying to bring him back to consciousness, the customers were diving under the benches scrambling for Jim Watts's gold teeth.

"Jim came to, and we had to slip him the sad news that his fancy steak chewers had been grabbed up by the fans as souvenirs. It was the only real gold rush I ever saw in the prize ring, and the funniest incident."

The call boy popped in again.

"C'mon, now, Mr. Humphreys, no kiddin'."

"All right, all right," said Joe B'Gee, lifting himself out of his chair, and in another two minutes the vast spaces of Madison Square Garden were shivering and quaking and booming and reverberating to the incredible bellows of this ageless ancient, the most famous announcer in all sportland.

# The Ill Wind

*An old trapper fights desperately for the little shanty that was his home*

By  
Don Cameron Shafer



YOU don't mean you're goin' to sell me out, sheriff?"

"It's the law of the land," replied the official, in the gruff tone of authority.

"Why, Jim"—there was fear in the old man's quavering voice—"this is my home. My folks cut this place out of the wilderness. The State give us the land."

"Sure, I know," nodded Sheriff Jim; "but death and taxes can't be dodged."

In his shiny new Portland cutter, his plump legs wrapped in a bearskin robe, the sheriff was a brave figure of a man, well fed, warmly dressed, and chewing a black cigar. His red, full-blooded face was shaven to the quick, and his stiff black hair had been newly cut until the white scalp glistened beneath his



"Missed!"

broad-brimmed felt hat. He presented a strange contrast to the shabby old man who stood before the cabin door—a thin, sinewy old woodsman in ragged clothing, with a grizzled beard, and gray hair curling

over his coat collar. The old-timer's knotted hands shook a little, and his nether lip trembled ever so slightly over each word.

"Gimme a little time, an' I'll pay the tax," he faltered.

"Nebbie, that's what you said last year, and the year before that."

"I just couldn't make it, Jim."

"It ain't anything I can help. God knows I hate this kind of business. For all I care you could stay here forever, and welcome. I wouldn't live a winter 'way back here in the woods if they gave me all the land I could walk around in a week; but I've got to serve this notification from the county treasurer that your place will be sold from the courthouse steps if the back taxes

aren't paid."

"I'll pay them, Jim, somehow. How much be they?"

"It's nigh fifty dollars, with back taxes, costs, and all."

"Fifty dollars!" cried old Nebbie, in surprise and consternation. "I never thought it was as much as that!"

"That's what it is. You haven't paid them for three years."

"Nobody'd buy the place. Nobody'd live 'way back here but us mountain folk."

"Don't be too sure about that," corrected the sheriff. "Lots of city people would like this old log cabin for a summer camp."

"They won't get it—not my home!"

"It won't be yours long, unless you pay the taxes."

Old Nebbie steadied himself with one hand against the doorpost, lifted feet as heavy as lead, and shuffled back indoors, too terrified to say another word in his own behalf. In that dark hour he appeared older and more feeble than he really was. An old man, alone in the world, without a home!

## II

NEBBIE was old, but by no means used up. His body was shrunken and withered, but still retained much of its strength and endurance. He was one of those gaunt mountain men who grow old on the outside but seem, somehow, to stay strong within. His mind was as simple as a child's. This tax business was his one and only worry. He lived frugally, carefully, and without any serious drains upon his usual vitality.

He was a typical woodsman, one of the old-timers who live by the gun. His father and his father's father before him had been hunters and trappers, and he knew no other trade. For many years he had depended entirely upon his gun and his traps to supply his simple wants, but each year his living had become more and more precarious.

Game grew steadily scarcer, and fur was more difficult to get. They stopped the sale of wild meat. Game laws became more strict, and wardens more watchful. There was no more hemlock bark to peel for the tanneries, no more lumber to be got out, and therefore no jobs to eke out a scant existence.

In time all these mountain men who were not actually starved out became guides, and earned a little money each summer and fall from fishing and hunting parties. In good years this additional income helped to tide them over the long winter; but the past season had been unusually bad. There were hard times in the cities, and money was scarce in the country, for few people could afford expensive vacations and hunting trips in the big woods.

By the time the deer season closed, and old Nebbie had laid in his necessary supplies of food, he had nothing left. Fifty dollars! Why, he didn't have fifty cents, and he knew that he wouldn't have much more than that before the trout season opened the following April.

From early in December until the middle of April, and often until the beginning of May, the Adirondacks are buried under many feet of snow. Every one who steps outside of open roadways or beaten paths must wear snowshoes. Hotels are closed, and no one comes to the summer camps. Most of the villages are all but deserted. Consequently there is no money to be earned, except such little as may be picked up here and there by trapping.

"I've got to get fifty dollars," muttered Nebbie.

To those in authority at the distant county seat it seemed strange and incomprehensible that this old man, like many others of his kind, should cling so tenaciously to the past, and should sacrifice so much to live alone, away back in the woods, without any con-

veniences. They could not understand his intense love for his home, humble though it was. They tried to make him come down to the county house, where there was steam heat, plenty of food, warm clothing, tobacco, newspapers, and company of his kind; but the old man's pride was such that he would have shot himself first. This little cabin, in a small clearing, looking out upon his beloved mountains and the great forest, was home—his home! He did not intend to leave it alive.

"They'd sell the roof over my head—my home, where my folks lived so long," he muttered sadly, "to some spectacled city greeny for a summer camp!"

### III

NEEDING a supply of meat for the long winter, and knowing no law but the law of necessity, Lafe Burgess shot two fat deer on the south side of Bald Mountain. He hog-dressed both carcasses and dragged them down near a tote road; and that evening, after it was dark, he borrowed an old horse and a block sleigh to bring in his meat.

Near his little cabin was a big swamp, with open spring holes, and in one of these he had sunk a pork barrel almost to the chime. Here he stored his illegal venison against unexpected visits from the State police or inquisitive game wardens.

It was about nine o'clock when he passed Nebbie's cabin, where a light showed, and Lafe stopped to ask the old man if he didn't want a nice piece of tenderloin.

"I got a ha'nch hauled up in a big spruce," confessed Nebbie. "I don't know as I'll need much meat this winter."

"You ain't goin' away?" questioned Lafe.

"Got to," the old woodsman replied sadly. "They're goin' to sell my place for taxes."

"That's bad!"

"Unless I raise fifty dollars."

"Fifty dollars don't grow on bushes up here no more."

"I thought maybe I could get a little fur."

"Fur's mighty scarce," said Lafe. "Skunk don't run in cold weather, an' coons have holed up for the winter. There's trap lines out on every bit of water fer rats an' mink an' otter; but, if you was younger, I'd tell you where you could get fifty dollars, an' mebbe more."

"Where?" Nebbie asked eagerly.

"When I was gettin' out this venison in the big spruce forest beyond Baldy, I seen sign of a sizable colony of pine marten."

"You never did!" the old man cried with all a trapper's enthusiasm.

"True as gospel," declared Lafe. "They was headed northwest, an' if you was ten year younger—"

"I'm young enough!"

"You only think you are," corrected Lafe. "Runnin' down a colony of marten is a mighty hard game for any man in the dead of winter."

"It's the only way to get 'em. I've done it lots of times."

"When you was younger."

"I ain't goin' to get no younger, an' I got to have fifty dollars!"

Lafe humored the old man by describing in detail just where he had seen the martens, but he had no idea that Nebbie would start out on such a hazardous enterprise. He did not know the old man's love for his mountain home, or realize that Nebbie was willing to make any sacrifice, endure any hardship, take any chance, to save it.

"Pine marten!" sighed Nebbie, when he was alone again. "They used to be right plenty. Why, I've sold lots of prime skins for two dollars and fifty cents. They're worth ten times that much now. Why, just two good pelts would pay them taxes!"

In the lean-to shed beside his cabin hung a bunch of rusty traps. He went out and got them. He sorted out all



the smaller traps, cleaned and oiled them, and looked his worn snowshoes over carefully. Then he got out his splint pack basket and filled it with supplies and provisions.

When old Nebbie went to his bunk late that night, he was all ready to take the long winter trail in the early morning.

#### IV

If a group of martens remained long in one winter locality, they would starve to death.

These valuable little fur bearers, with all their beauty, are devilish killers. They are about the size of a mink, but have a longer and bushier tail and a softer fur, ranging in color from a light golden brown to an almost unmixed black. Their natural home is in the tree-tops, where they are swifter and more agile than any squirrel. Though they travel fast and far, usually at night, or at dusk and dawn, they are equally at home upon the ground or in the trees.

They prey upon every living thing that they can overpower. Though squirrels probably make up half their diet, they destroy great numbers of grouse and smaller birds, besides mice, chipmunks, rabbits, and the young of many species. Because they are more or less gregarious, and love companionship, two or three families frequently travel together during the winter months. With fifteen or twenty of these swift murderers at large, any district is soon hunted out, and the colony must keep moving along the hardwood ridges and through the heavily timbered higher ground, where evergreen trees prevail and squirrels are most plentiful.

When man puts a heavy price upon the skin of any beast, however difficult it may be to hunt and trap, it soon becomes scarce. Though the marten was formerly abundant in every county of New York State, and throughout the Northern States, it has become rare,

especially in the East. Lumbering operations, forest fires, and persistent trapping have pretty nearly exterminated it. Less than two hundred skins are taken in the Adirondacks each winter, where once thousands were trapped annually.

The few that are taken are usually picked up in traps set for other fur bearers, or in special sets in favorable localities that can be looked after without extra trouble. It no longer pays to put out a "sable line"—hundreds of traps, over miles of wooded ridges—specially for these animals. Winter marten colonies are so scarce, and the work is so hard, that few trappers will follow these wanderers of the woods, sleeping in brush shelters, enduring all the discomforts of living outdoors in the depth of winter, for the sake of the few skins that they are likely to get.

"There ain't many trappers out in the big woods this winter," argued Nebbie, "an' they're all too lazy to camp on the trail of a marten colony. Maybe I won't have to foller the varmints more'n a few days to pick up three or four prime skins."

At daylight the next morning—a still, cold morning—he started out. Upon his back was a heavy pack basket containing his few supplies—a couple of blankets, some traps, and a little food. In one mittened hand he carried a light twenty-two-caliber rifle. Traveling far and fast, he had no use for a heavier gun.

The intense cold made the snow creak under his webs as he struck out straight through the forest for the spruce ridge beyond Bald Mountain, certain that somewhere out there he could pick up the trail of the marten group.

"I'm going to get that money in fur," declared he, "or not come back at all!"

#### V

THOSE who know the Big Woods only during the pleasant days of sum-

mer, who travel along established trails with good guides, among jolly company of their kind, would be awed and frightened by that same forest in winter.

As old Nebbie plodded on, more than three feet of snow covered the ground. Along the high ridges and the mountain tops the wind had whipped the trees free from snow, and in the bright light of early morning the endless forest appeared blue black against the azure sky; but in the lowlands, where Nebbie picked his way, the heavy-branched spruces sagged earthward beneath their loads of white. The great forest was as silent as an empty world. The dark evergreens, crowding close, shut out the light and made it dark and eerie, lonesome and threatening, to any one not familiar with the woods in winter.

To the old woodsman, however, all this was beautiful, all this was home. He did not dread the winter. He enjoyed the silence. He liked the snow. He did not feel the cold. The labor of his going, under a heavy pack, kept him fully warm, though the snow creaked beneath his plodding webs, trees beside him cracked with frost, and his own puffing white breath froze into hard ice upon his bearded lips.

As the old man walked, his keen eyes were ever upon the white snow before him, reading it as a page from a book, searching among rabbit tracks, squirrel sign, mice runways, for the first indication of the tiny animals he sought.

"If this weather will only hold"—it was almost a prayer—"I ought to strike sign by to-morrow!"

He went straight up through Deep Notch and came out upon the pine ridge north of Baldy, knowing this to be a good country for squirrels, and therefore sure to attract any roving band of marten.

"Tough little devils!" said he. "The worse the weather, the better they seem to like it. They'd feed all last

night, cold as it was. I'll find where they hunted—a few dead rabbits sucked dry, a grouse or two pulled out of its sleeping tunnel in the snow, an empty squirrel skin dropped from the trees. They'll be restin' an' sleepin', now, in some thick patch of spruce. All I've got to do is to head 'em off."

Though marten seem to travel over accepted routes, appearing here to-day and being gone to-morrow, they do not use any regular runways, or even the same ridges. Wherever small game seems to be most abundant, there they will hunt.

Nebbie traveled at no great speed, probably not more than two miles an hour, but he kept moving every hour of light. The marten is one of the quickest and speediest of all the small animals, yet the old trapper knew that he could run down his prey if his strength held. Unalarmed and unmolested, the little killers would spend most of their time hunting out the country through which they passed.

That night he camped in an abandoned log cabin, building up a good fire, cooking a substantial supper, and enjoying a fine rest. He was away again at daylight. Late that afternoon he found his first marten track, which looked as if some one had pressed the first two fingers of one hand lightly in the snow at intervals of about three feet.

"I'm on your trail!" he cried, though he judged the sign to be at least one day old. "Try an' lose me 'fore I've taken toll!"

Expert knowledge of the country enabled Nebbie to follow along in the general direction the martens had taken, although more than once the trail was lost for a long interval when all the animals had taken to the trees. A skilled tracker, he noted bits of bark that had rattled down on the white snow to indicate their direction and to keep him on his course. At dusk that night he saw a dark object swinging in the naked top of a sugar maple, and

knew that his search was over. He had caught up with the martens.

Watching, he saw a terrified red squirrel streaking through the tree-tops, and behind it, as relentless as death, the sinewy, snaky, lightning fast marten. Both vanished from his sight in the dense foliage of a spruce.

"To-morrow I'll set my traps!"

With one of his snowshoes Nebbie shoveled out a place for his fire. He cut a quantity of wood, most of it green white birch, which burns slowly, and then threw up a small shelter of spruce boughs. In this tiny and primitive camp he made tea and cooked a frugal supper. Then he rolled into his double blankets before the fire and slept.

He awoke in the chill of dawn, shivering with cold, but eager for the day.

"I must get a line of traps ahead of them," he planned. "When they start out, they'll be hungry. Three or four skins, an' I can go right home. Once, on Windy Ridge, I got four marten in one night."

With the first light he was away again on the trail, which was easy to follow now, and before noon he had located a heavy clump of tall spruces where he knew the tiny animals were resting. He circled, so as not to disturb them.

He had to guess the route they would probably take when they started out again at dusk; but he knew the habits of martens, and felt sure that they would keep to high ground and the heavier timber. So, about a mile ahead, he set a string of traps entirely across the narrow ridge. It would be impossible for the little hunters to go that way without scenting some of his baits.

It is not difficult to catch marten, if one can find them. They are bold and fearless animals, totally without suspicion. They are never hunted, except by man, and seem to have no fear of traps. It is not necessary even to disguise the sets.

Nebbie notched a tree and set a trap in the notch, baiting it with a piece of squirrel. He placed another on a wind-fall, covering it lightly with grouse feathers and adding a drop or two of blood. When all his steel traps had been set in this manner, he prepared a deadfall or two; and then, with an old-fashioned auger from his pack basket, he made the best marten set of all.

First he bored a two-inch hole six inches deep into a spruce. Around the rim of this hole he drove in, slanting toward the center, three long, well-sharpened finishing nails. A bit of raw meat was pushed back into the hole for bait. Scenting this, a marten would think it something left in a squirrel hole, and would force his way in to get the meat; and the nails would make it impossible to back out again.

Along the lower side of the ridge old Nebbie made a number of these sets, working away at his traps until it was almost time for the animals to appear. Then he circled about and made camp for the night at a little distance.

## VI

By some strange trick of chance the hunting martens, under the pale winter moon, left the ridge they had been following and descended into a spruce swamp on the south side. They cut down from the high ground long before they came to Nebbie's carefully set traps. After hunting rabbits all through the swamp they came out on the flank of another ridge and followed it westward.

"It's a mighty tough game," sighed Nebbie, when he saw this. "I'll keep after 'em, an' the luck will change after a while."

He picked up his traps and such bait as he could recover, and took to the trail again. In the soft snow of the big spruce swamp it was easy to follow, for the martens had run all over the place during the hours of moonlight, and there was no need to pick out individual tracks. All Nebbie

wanted to know was where they came out of the swamp and which way they went; so he struck straight through.

In the center of the swamp he came upon a large deer yard, where about thirty deer were wintering. In the shelter of the low spruces they had opened up a long series of crisscross paths through the deep snow, wherein they could walk, or run, and move about to feed. In the absence of accessible water they ate snow.

"A hunk of venison would taste good right now," sighed the trapper, "but I got to travel fast and light."

Even with a twenty-two-caliber rifle, at that close range, he could have killed a small deer with a carefully placed heart shot, but he could not bother with the meat.

True to their instinct, the martens came out of the swamp on the far side and hunted along the heavily timbered slope of another mountain. After a long and difficult search, involving several steep climbs on snowshoes, Nebbie approximately located the spot where they were resting. Then he made a careful survey of the surrounding forest, and judged as nearly as he could where they would be most likely to travel when they started out again. In this path he set all his traps, just as he had set them the day before. He worked at this until late afternoon, and then sought a projecting ledge of rock, where he made his simple camp.

Nebbie was like a northern Indian in his ability to make a comfortable camp in the dead of winter. With his belt ax he cut browse and made a deep, warm nest for his blankets under the overhang of the cliff. He piled up logs, supported by rocks, for a back to his fire, so as to reflect the heat into his shelter. He melted snow for hot tea, and made a good meal of bacon and pan bread. Then, warm and comfortable, he rolled himself up in his blankets and slept.

The marten colony came along the lower end of the trap line, all but two

of the animals passing over it high in the tree-tops, hunting for squirrels. Every tree was investigated, every hole and hollow nosed out. When a sleeping red squirrel heard the ominous scratch of sharp nails on the hollow tree that was its winter home, it fled in terror, with half a dozen dusky demons of the night in swift pursuit. A frightened red squirrel is almost as fast as a streak of light, but the swifter and more agile martens were even quicker, and few of the fugitives escaped.

The two martens that chanced to be on the ground when the colony passed the traps ran lightly and swiftly over the snow. So light, so fast, so daintily swift their flashing feet and undulating bodies, they hardly sank into the soft snow at all. They went leaping, bounding, arching over the white surface, swift as the racing shadow of some fast flying bird between white earth and yellow moon. At a little distance it did not seem possible that these flashing shadows could be animal life.

One of the two, a young female, ran right over a trap on a windfall log and failed to spring it. Scenting a bit of raw meat and blood against the trunk of a spruce, she leaped up, thrust her head into the newly cut notch, and was caught around the neck by the steel jaws.

The other, a large male, running farther to one side in his hunting, saw nothing of this. Attracted by a few fluffy grouse feathers on the snow, he stopped, caught the scent of meat, and followed it with his keen nose. Any hole in a tree was worth investigating by a hungry marten, and in this one he could smell fresh meat. He forced his head in, seized the bit of flesh—and was unable to get out again. He struggled frantically, almost ripping out of his own skin, but the sharp nails held.

"Just a couple of skins!" begged Nebbie, as he packed up and hurried



away to his traps that morning. "I'm gettin' pretty old for this business, an' it's a long ways home."

## VII

"I've got one!"

From a considerable distance away Nebbie could see the thrashing tail and writhing hind quarters of a struggling marten. He ran up and struck the imprisoned animal across the back with a stick, killing it instantly. Then he carefully cut out the wire nails with his hunting knife, and the dark, fluffy, handsome fur was his.

"Worth at least thirty dollars!" he exclaimed.

Putting it in his coat pocket, he hurried on along the trap line, eager for another catch. Ahead he saw a trap dangling.

"Another!"

But in this he was doomed to disappointment. There had been another, the young female, but he had not cut the notch high enough, and a prowling fox had been able to reach the writhing body. When Nebbie hurried up to his trap, it contained nothing but the tiny front foot of a marten. Below the trap, in the snow, he easily read what had happened.

"A mangy, sneaky, thievin' fox—robbin' me of thirty dollars!"

Nebbie took his trap and went on, still hopeful, but he found that all the other martens had passed on unscathed.

Some distance farther along the line, as he was taking up his traps, a big white owl flapped out of a spruce and sailed away, and atop the ridge Nebbie saw another. He knew by these signs that an unusually hard winter was gripping the far north. When northern owls and hawks come southward in January, it is a sure sign that food is scarce in their natural territory.

The old trapper wasn't interested in owls, however. He put his traps in his pack basket and made ready to take up the long chase again. On such a difficult journey even ounces count,

and he lingered to skin out the dead marten. He brushed the snow from a convenient log, there in the open wood, and laid out the limp body. For a minute he stood there admiring it; then he turned aside to his pack basket, a few steps away, for a smaller and sharper skinning knife to remove the delicate pelt.

While his back was turned he heard a strange hissing in the still, cold air, the unmistakable whistle of strong pinions in swift flight. He turned just in time to see the flashing, swooping body of a goshawk hurtling downward through the trees. The famished bird scarcely hesitated in its terrific swoop as it seized the dead marten from the log and towered swiftly above the trees.

He grabbed his rifle and fired at the fleeing robber. With almost incredible speed, capable of overtaking the fastest flying duck, the great northern hawk swerved and sped away on flashing wings.

"My marten!"

Nebbie was choking with rage, so that he could hardly speak, as he jumped about to keep the bird in sight between the crowding tree trunks. The trees were so high, and the branches so thick, that he soon lost sight of the marauder. Hastily grabbing up his pack basket, he set out fast as he could go in the general direction the bird had taken, his rifle ready, searching every naked tree for a sight of his enemy; but wherever the goshawk alighted to devour its stolen meal, old Nebbie never saw it again.

"Almost snatched it right out of my hands!" groaned the old man. "I guess luck has left me for good an' all."

He went plodding on, mile after mile, following the marten group for another chance with his traps.

## VIII

FOR two whole days the northern blizzard raged. Beginning at daylight

on a Thursday morning, a strong northeast wind had brought down from the arctic regions a slanting fall of fine snow. The puffing wind caught the tiny flakes and piled them up in fantastic billows and mounds of white. More and more heavily they fell, hour after hour, filling the air, blotting out everything.

On the first day of the storm Nebbie had hastily thrown up a bough house—a strong pole laid across between two trees, about six feet high, with other poles slanting down against the wind, and all thickly covered with heavy spruce boughs. Under this he crouched, feeding his struggling fire and patiently waiting for the storm to cease.

All other life in that great forest, except the martens, sought shelter and waited out the storm; but those hardy little creatures, inured to cold and bitter winds, hunted on and on as if they really enjoyed it. Nebbie, crouching in his shelter, knew that when the storm ceased it would be doubtful if he ever found their trail.

"I ain't got grub to go much further," he told himself, for his little store of food was almost gone. "I'd have to have big luck to pick up the trail again."

Though there were brief intervals when the snowfall slackened and the wind calmed down a bit, still the storm kept up through the night and all the next day. A tired man, fighting cold, cannot do without food. By the evening of the second day the old trapper's stock was practically finished, and he knew that the hunt was over.

"I have all I can do to get back home," he acknowledged.

Deeper snow made walking more difficult than ever. It would be days before it was sufficiently wind-packed and frost-hardened to bear the weight of his body on snowshoes, so that he could move fast enough to keep pace with the marten colony. In the meantime, while he waited, the speedy little

animals would be many miles away and their trail would be blotted out.

On the third morning it was still snowing and blowing, but Nebbie could wait no longer, for his food was gone. He cached his heavy traps and the pack basket, carrying nothing but his blankets and his light rifle, with which he hoped to secure some small game. With the wind at his back he started out on the long journey homeward.

The soft snow, into which his snowshoes sank nearly ten inches at every step, made slow and difficult going; and yet he must push on and on, plodding steadily along through a world of white, with the icy flakes whirling all about him. At times he could see only a few yards ahead, as if through a thick mist; but all the time, as he plodded on wearily, hungrily, his bright old eyes were alert for the sight of any living creature.

"A crow would be a banquet right now," he admitted.

But he didn't see so much as a jay. Everything was hiding from the storm, except this old man who knew that he had to get out of the woods before he perished.

Another day had passed. Still old Nebbie was stumbling along, his legs growing weaker, his brain touched with delirium.

"If I can get just two marten skins!" he muttered.

The martens were more than fifty miles behind him. An old man, his store of vitality was limited, his recuperative powers diminished. Exposure and fatigue demanded nourishing food when there was no food. Still he stumbled on, making less than a mile an hour, but still guided by the woodsman's inherent sense of direction.

"Sell my place for taxes, indeed!"

He was no longer hungry, but just weak and exhausted, with a curious emptiness within, and his legs were threatening to freeze with the cold.

He stumbled and almost fell into a mass of thick young spruces.

"Can't you see where you're going?" he scolded himself, petulantly.

Struggling up, he went on. In a few steps he came to the edge of the lowland, where the ground rose sharply to a hardwood forest. Here, against the base of a mountain, an eddy of wind sucked upward, lifting the falling snow like a curtain; and Nebbie looked ahead to see a dark object struggling up the steep slope before him.

"It's a young deer!" he cried. "I must have scared it out of them heavy spruces when I fell."

He pulled the mitten from his right hand and threw up his rifle; but his arms wavered, and he stepped quickly aside to steady the rifle barrel against a tree. Whatever was the animal before him, it could make no great speed through the soft snow, progressing by short leaps, and sinking deeper at every lunge. The sight of game, the promise of food, steadied the old trapper's nerves. Taking careful aim, before the snow whirled down again, he fired.

With the snapping report of the little rifle the storm descended and blotted out everything. Summoning the last of his strength, the old man stumbled on, struck into the trail ahead, and followed it up to where he had shot. The snow was empty.

"Missed!"

Weakness came over him, he felt himself falling—and then his eyes caught a dark splotch of red in the trail beyond.

"No—I hit him!"

The sight of blood was like a powerful stimulant to Nebbie. It set his old heart to pounding madly, his thin blood to racing. It aroused within him all his hunting instincts, and he went on with new strength and firmer step.

The red grew wider, redder. Over an old log, in a slight hollow, lay a dark furry object, powdered with snow.

"Ha!" he gasped. "Ha!"

He hurried eagerly to the spot, threw down his rifle, and grabbed his quarry like a starving man.

"Nothin' but a stinkin' dog fox!" he cried.

For a minute he was cruelly disappointed and slightly nauseated, for, starving though he was, he could not eat a fox. Then, shaking the powdered snow from the furry skin, so that he could see it better, he started in astonishment.

"A cross fox!" he shouted.

The large dog fox in his trembling hands was strangely marked. Its thick coat was not so much red as yellow, with most of the guard hairs tipped with black. The usual black of a red fox's feet and lower legs ran up this skin and across the fore shoulder, where it was intersected by another black line running down the center of the animal's back from head to tail, forming a perfect cross.

"Sell my home for taxes, will you?"

The old man laughed and shouted, hysterical with joy. Forgotten his hunger, his weariness, the storm.

"I'll pay them taxes, just as I said I would!" he cried. "This skin's worth a hundred dollars!"

Now he had something to live for. Now there was additional reason why he must get home safely. Success lifted him from his lethargy and gave him renewed strength and purpose.

"My luck sure has changed!"

Beyond a doubt it had. While he was skinning out the fox, he heard the soft *peet, peet, peet* of a family of grouse in a near-by spruce. He looked up to see the birds not ten yards from him. With the little rifle in steady hands, taking care to shoot the lower birds first, so that their falling might not frighten the others, he shot down four of them before the rest flew.

"I'll camp right here till I rest an' feed," he decided. "Then I'll strike over to Lafe's an' stay there till I go down to sell this skin an' pay them taxes!"

# World of Whispers

*Two gentlemen of the underworld spend a pleasant evening in a West Side hideaway after the custom of their kind*

By Francis McAllister



His body was limp, and he hurled him into a corner

**W**HEN Murdock came to Monk Gregg's apartment on West Sixty-Eighth Street, he was in a very bad way. He came late at night. The lights in the hallways of the building had already been dimmed, but, even so, the ravages of dissipation and disease showed plainly upon his small and undistinguished face. His skin was the color of faded parchment, and there were puffy blue crescents under his eyes. The pupils of the eyes themselves were contracted to the size of pin points.

Monk answered the summons of the doorbell. He was alone at the time. When he perceived the identity of his visitor, he looked annoyed.

"What is it you want?" he said. "Didn't I tell you to keep out of here?"

"I can't help it, Monk," replied Murdock. "I had to come up here. I'm as sick as a dog."

"You're always sick, because you don't get on to yourself. If you get a yen and think I'm buying for you, think again."

Murdock grinned feebly.

"I got some," he said. "I got some right here with me; but I can't cook. I'm shaky in the hands, and I'm too sick to cook. You'll cook for me, won't you? Won't you, Monk?"

"All right," Monk agreed ungraciously. "The kitchenette."

Eagerly Murdock sidled in. He went through the apartment, but paused on the threshold of an inner door.

"Hurry up, will you?" he asked. "I'm as sick as seven dogs."

Monk followed deliberately.



Upon entering the kitchenette, he found that certain articles had already been produced and laid along the edge of the sink. A large safety pin was in evidence, with a piece of strong twine and a spoon with a broken handle. As he came in, the caller pulled a folded envelope and a medicine dropper from the pocket of his coat.

"There's the layout," said Murdock. "Let's make it snappy."

Unbuckling his belt, he lowered his trousers and bared the upper part of his leg. The skin was pitted and scarred with patches which varied in hue from dull purple to angry red.

Monk gave scant heed to the other man's remarks. Unfolding the envelope, he measured out a pinch of white powder.

"What the hell is that for—a mosquito?" protested Murdock. "I'm sick, I tell you! I got the horrors, and I want to be fixed up."

Monk added more powder, and placed the increased dose in the spoon. He filled the spoon to its lip with water.

Murdock took a turn about his leg with the twine, and knotted it tightly. Then he drove the end of the safety pin deep into his flesh, just below the line of the improvised tourniquet. Monk ignited a match and held it under the spoon. As the liquid bubbled, he filled the dropper and passed it to Murdock.

The latter made an injection, inserting the dropper's tiny nozzle into the crude puncture made by the pin. He sighed as the drug shot home. The tenseness in the muscles of his face relaxed.

"Thanks, Monk!" he said. "I needed that."

A fit of nausea seized him. He leaned over the sink, retching violently.

As he recovered, his host spoke.

"All right now," declared Monk. "Grab your layout and get out of here. You can't help getting sick, but I'm through being the goat!"

"O. K., big shot," said Murdock.

"That's all O. K. with me. You're a regular friend, you are. You're the kind of a guy a man can trust. If anybody should ask me who's my best friend, I'll tell him that Monk Gregg's my best friend. You're always my best friend. When I'm sick, I know just the friend to go to. Old Monk is the guy who's my friend, and—"

"Shut your trap!" interrupted Monk. "Get out! I don't want you around here. I don't want any hop-heads around here."

He strode from the kitchenette and flung himself into an easy-chair in the living room. Murdock followed, and sat down heavily on the day bed. The tenseness in his face had now completely vanished, but his eyes were slightly glassy.

"There's nobody like old Monk," he muttered. "That's what I always say. There's nobody like him. I want to sit and talk to him."

Five minutes passed—ten minutes. Murdock's speech was thickening.

"When I'm like this, y' understand, I know everything—everything there is to know. It just comes to me. I can see and hear everything. They tell me, see? They always tell me. I can hear them all. I can hear every voice from the Bronx to the Battery and from Hoboken to Astoria. It's a lot of whispering, and you can't hear it, but I hear it. I know all about everything. I know about the accident at Third Avenue and Eighty-Fourth. There was an accident there to-night, and two cars were smashed up and a woman killed. And I heard about the night clubs that was pulled along the main stem. The Silver Gondola was one of them. I heard that a certain party was knocked off over in Brooklyn by a mob from Chicago. I heard the why of it. I hear everything. It seems this party was knocked off for hi-jacking trucks from the guy that hired him to guard them, that's what."

Monk was interested. His attitude of boredom fell away.

"Who was knocked off?" he inquired, leaning forward. "Is that on the level, what you said?"

"I know everything about everything," droned Murdock. "I hear forty million things every day, and I heard this. I heard Frankie Ford was knocked off. There were three gorillas from Chicago in the car, and they knocked him off with a machine gun. They were Chicago guys, and they knocked him off for hi-jacking the wop that hired Frankie's mob out. And this Frankie's a friend of a friend of mine named Monk."

His head sagged lower. He stopped speaking, and breathed stertorously. Then he controlled himself with a visible effort.

"This Monk Gregg's my friend," he went on. "He's a square John, and he's my friend, because he cooks for me when I'm sick. That's why I like him. I'm going to see him to-night, and I'll tell him to keep out of this jam, because he's my friend, and I don't want to see him dead. He's my friend, and that's why I ain't going to slip him the low-down I got about Theresa. Theresa is stepping with one of these Chicago gorillas on the side, and it was Theresa that slipped them the office on the hi-jacking racket. That's why Frankie got himself knocked off; but I ain't going to tell my friend a single thing about that, because he's my—friend—and—I—like—"

Murdock's chin fell to his breast. His body seemed to shrink. He commenced to snore.

Monk, squatting in his chair, was immobile. His features were frozen and expressionless.

"Theresa—she turned rat!" he whispered through stiff lips. "Theresa—she squealed!" His fingers worked. The veins on his forehead swelled. "Hey, you!" he shouted.

Murdock did not move. With a yell of rage, Monk leaped on the helpless man, tore at his shoulders, twisted his head.

"Come back here!" he screeched. "Come back here till I choke you for a liar, you hop-headed piece of punk!"

He jerked Murdock to his feet savagely. The fellow's body was limp, and Monk hurled him into a corner. There was silence for an instant. Then, from the corner, there drifted a muted snore.

Monk glared around wildly. His eyes were suffused with blood. All at once he ran amuck. Chairs, tables, bric-a-brac, went flying in every direction. In his fury he shattered the window with his fist, indifferent to possible cuts.

As suddenly as it had come, his rage spent itself. He sank to the floor and buried his head in his hands.

A knock sounded on the door. Monk stirred.

Outside stood the negro janitor.

"What you-all doin' up here, Mr. Gregg? What's all the ruckus? Folks downstairs, they say there's a fight."

"No fight, Henry," said Monk.

"But the folks downstairs—"

Monk lifted a threatening fist.

"Go away! Get out of here!"

The negro fled.

Monk turned. His eye fell upon the telephone. Like a man in a trance, he crossed the room toward it. Picking up the instrument, he called a number in Chickering.

Presently he began to speak.

"Is that you, babe?" he said. "Yes, Monk talking. Say, Theresa, can you take a trip up here? I've got something for you. Yes, something special. It won't keep. Kind of a present, see? O. K., babe. Take a taxi."

He replaced the receiver gently. Then, going to his bureau, he opened a drawer. Within, on top of a pile of handkerchiefs, there lay a stubby automatic pistol. Monk took it out and closed the drawer.

In the center of the floor an overturned chair pointed its legs at the ceiling. He righted it. Then he sat waiting, with the pistol in his hand.

# Plays and Players

*Novelties of stage design and massed scenes which  
overshadow the accompanying art of acting*

By Richard Lockridge



HELL—I am neither swearing nor trying to bring to a first sentence that vigorous abruptness sought by the beginning author who quoted the duchess with such remarkable effect—is fabricated of structural steel and swarms with devils who run up and down ladders and throw switches. The inside of a zeppelin in flight over the Atlantic is barren, but stable, and is furnished in wicker. Venice of old crowned her queen of beauty in a ceremony of such magnificence as permanently to alter one's perception of visual values, so that, having once witnessed it, a sunset by contrast seems mild and not a little faint.

All this I have learned, neither by travel nor by study, but through the sitting in many orchestra chairs and the looking up, earnestly, at scenes lighted by the foots—although, of course, the foots play now but a minor part in the illumination of what goes on behind them. This I have learned—and what a meeting of the British cabinet looks like, the nature of the spectacle presented by a Harlem “rent party,” the true appearance of the inside of a power house, the drabness to

be encountered by one who looks in on a Chicago pressroom, the excitement which may pervade an Amsterdam Avenue cigar store, the squirming which the solidity of a brownstone apartment house on the middle west side of New York City may belie. Along Broadway one sees everything and goes everywhere.

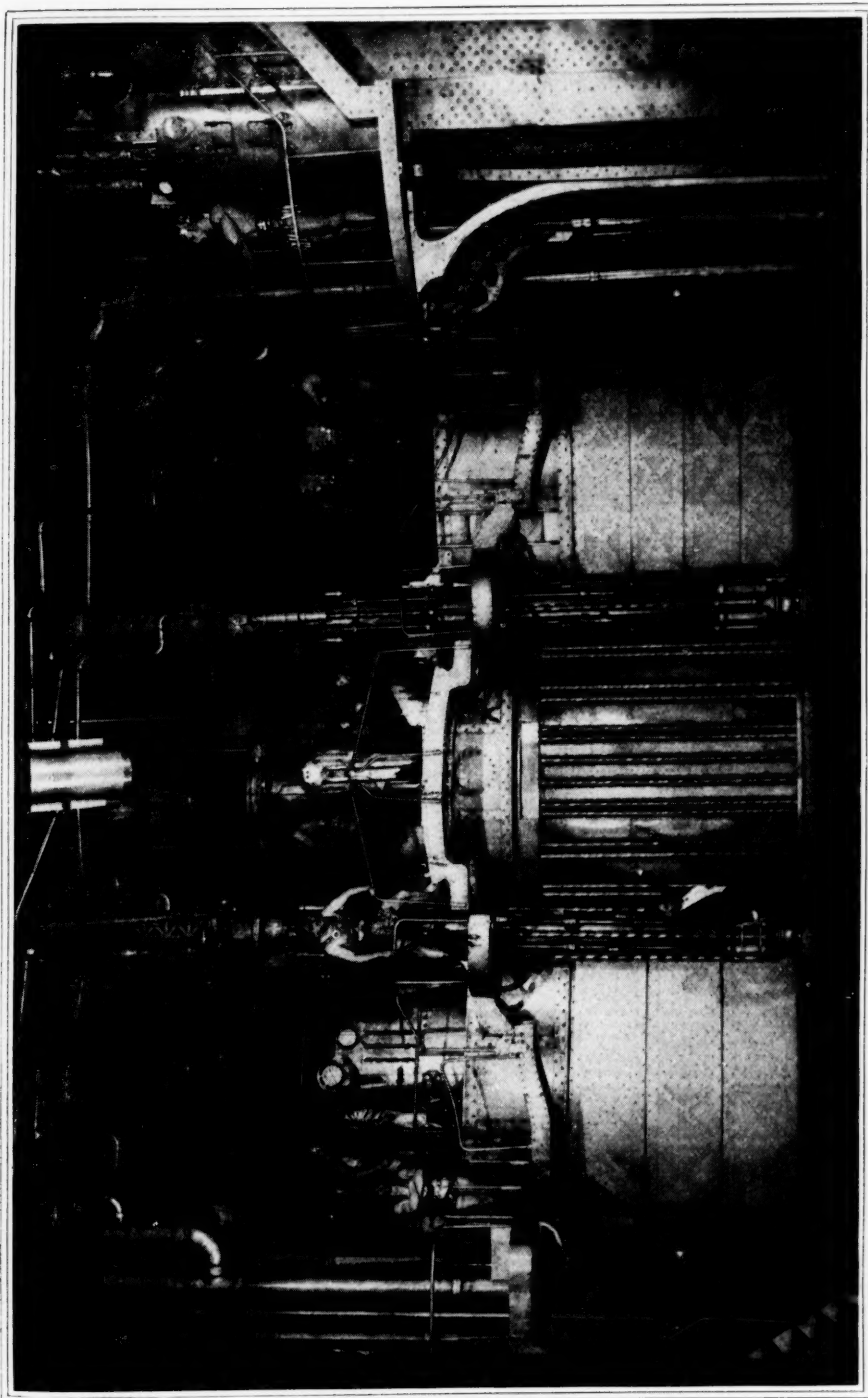
You go to hell at the Belasco Theater when you attend a performance of “Mima.” A visit to “Dynamo” takes you inside the power house, and it is at “Harlem” that one is permitted to see the strange scenes which, in the negro district, presumably ensue when some one invites a few friends in to help raise the rent. Other visits, which one still may make or which one was at some time urged to make during the theatrical season now drawing to its close, showed things even more startling.

And it is possible, in looking back over such visits made, to wonder whether the season of 1928-1929 has not been, on the whole, more noteworthy in its novelty of stage design and its direction of massed scenes than it has been as a contribution to the literature of drama or to the art of acting.

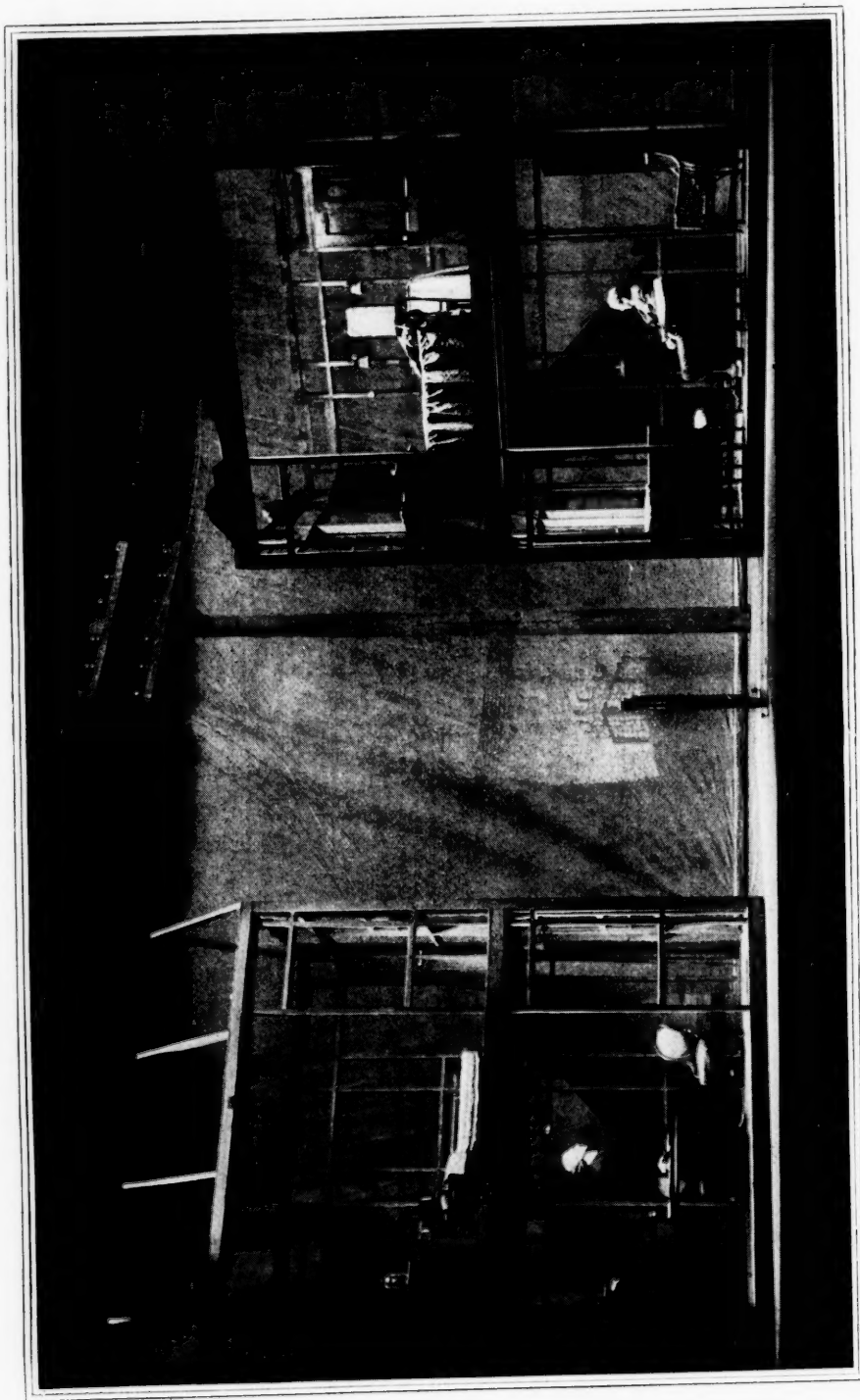




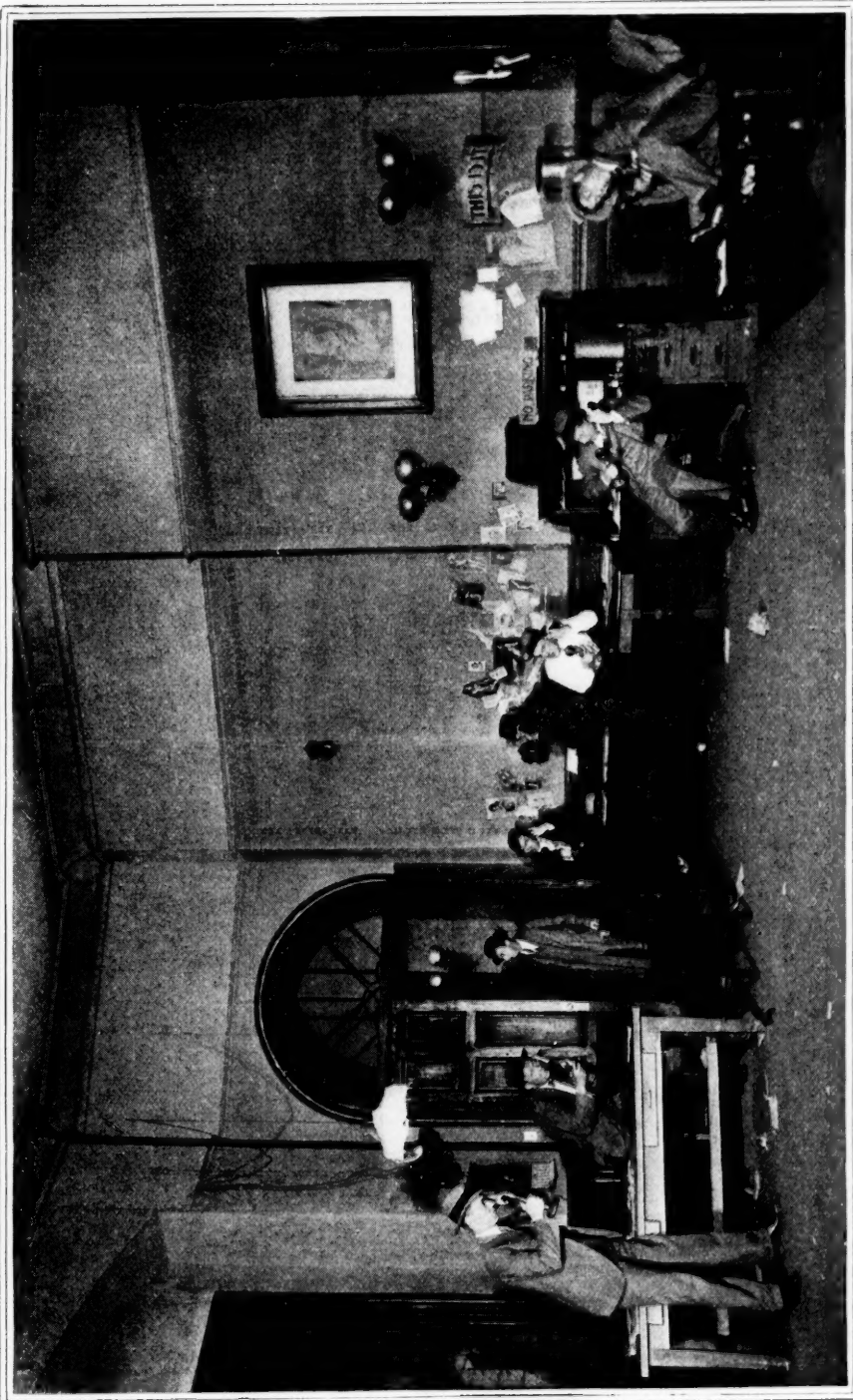




Hell is constructed of steelwork, according to Mr. David Belasco's setting of "Mima."



The first act scene of "Dynamo," a Theater Guild production



A newspaper adjunct to a criminal court—a true-to-life setting—in "The Front Page."





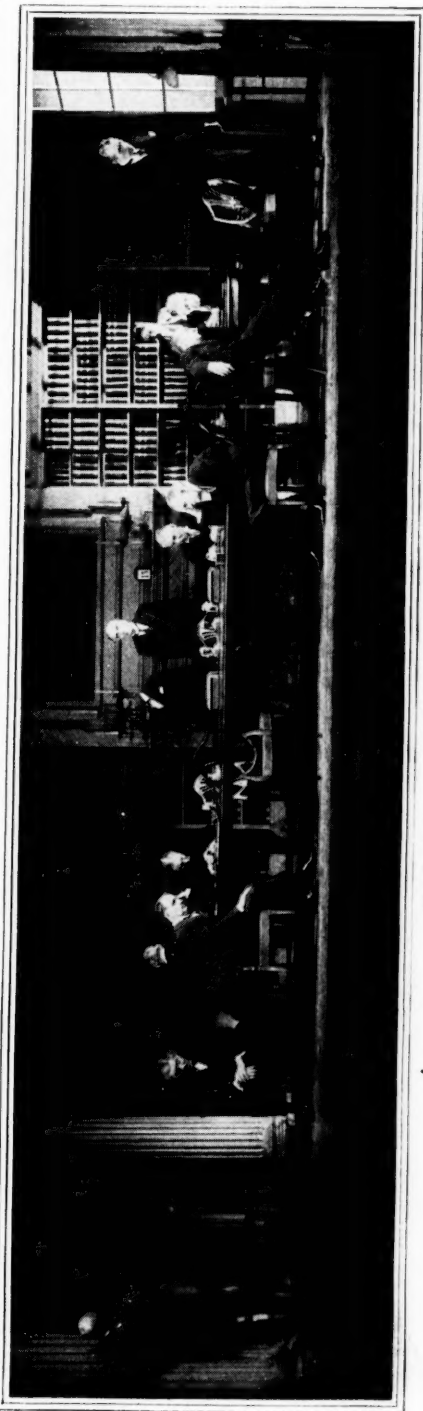
Scene I, Act III, of "Kibitzer," with *Lazarus* in a frenzy of speculation

I do not, in suggesting such a possibility, wish to imply any considerable pessimism about the season. It was lamented steadily from its beginning, largely on the ground that business was bad. Possibly it was. But, a little before the beginning of Lent, business picked up materially. And even before that the quality of the plays improved, so that in its latter months there was ample ground for optimism on both scores. No great plays had their original productions during the last fall or winter, but rather more than the usual number of good ones did manage to wedge in between the groans.

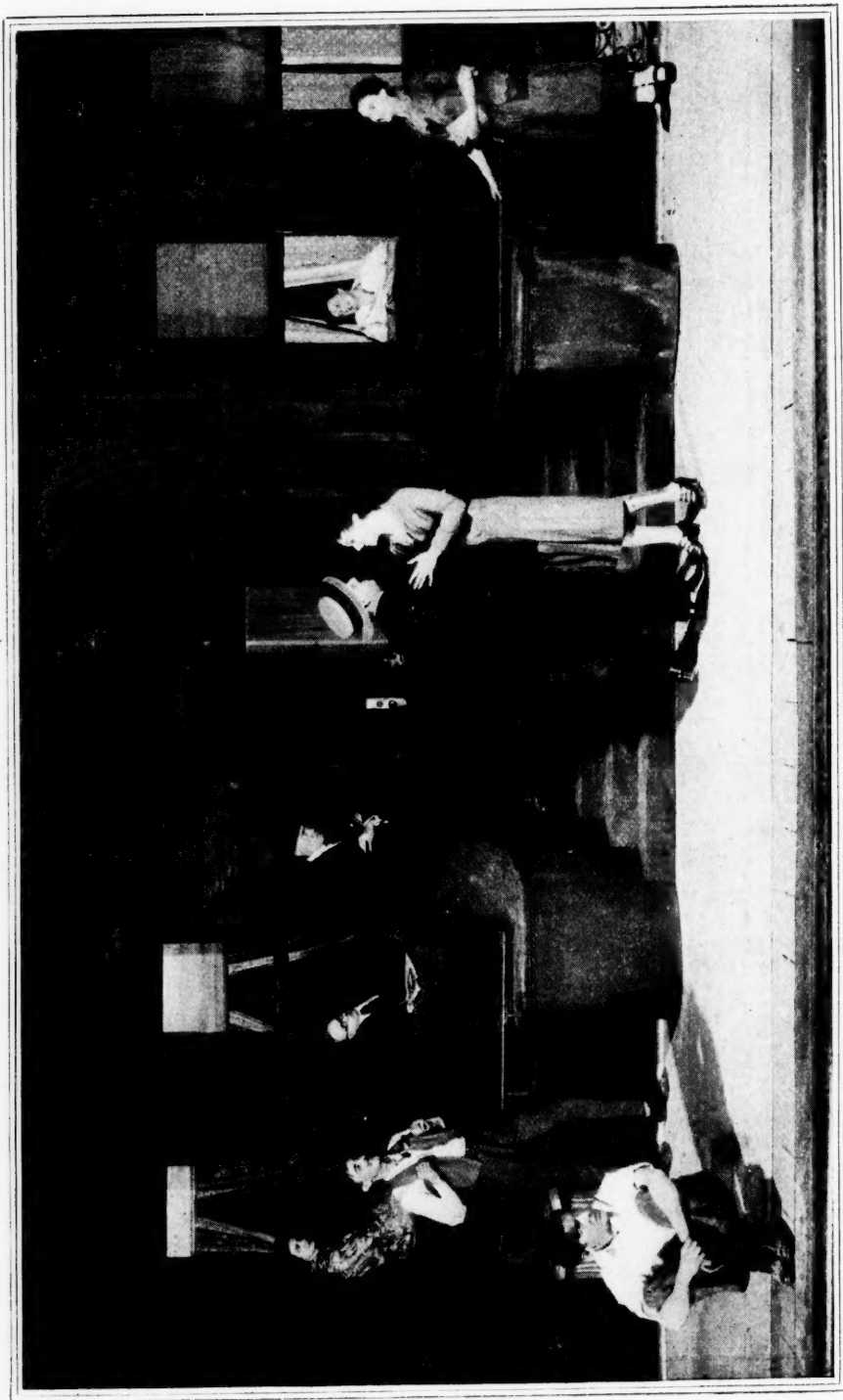
With that possibility in mind, this report from the Broadway front will, therefore, turn for the moment from a consideration either of the literature or the personalities of the drama to comment upon some of the more outstanding of its contribution to spectacle and to the use of mass scenes.

Perhaps it is because, as this is written, the air is filled with the racket and thumping of pneumatic hammers at work on the skeleton of a new apartment house next door that I cannot avoid feeling a certain almost religious truth in David Belasco's thought that hell must be constructed of steel girders. And certainly, in working out that notion, he managed to give a vigorous and rather magnificent setting to his trite little morality play, which he called "Mima" presumably so that Lenore Ulric would have a title rôle to take. The play was, as I have already contended, utterly insignificant, but people are still going in crowds to see the steel work.

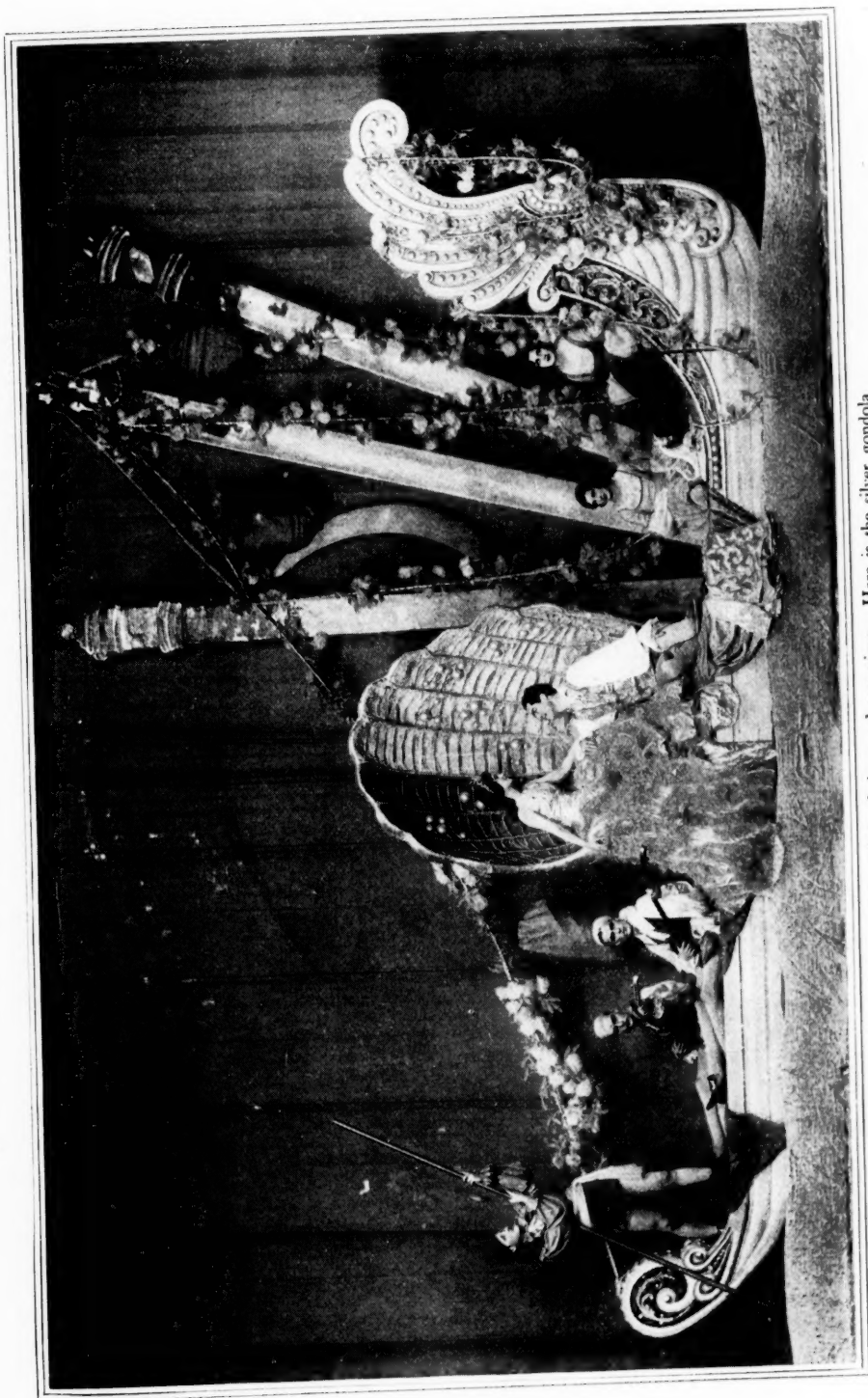
The setting really extended beyond the stage. The walls of the theater were armored, and, at odd angles, iron ladders reached down from little observation booths, rather reminiscent of the crow's-nests of battleships. Between the orchestra seats and the stage there was a pit, which subsequently was occupied by many devils, illumi-



A group scene, notable for balance and rhythmic direction, in "Wings Over Europe."

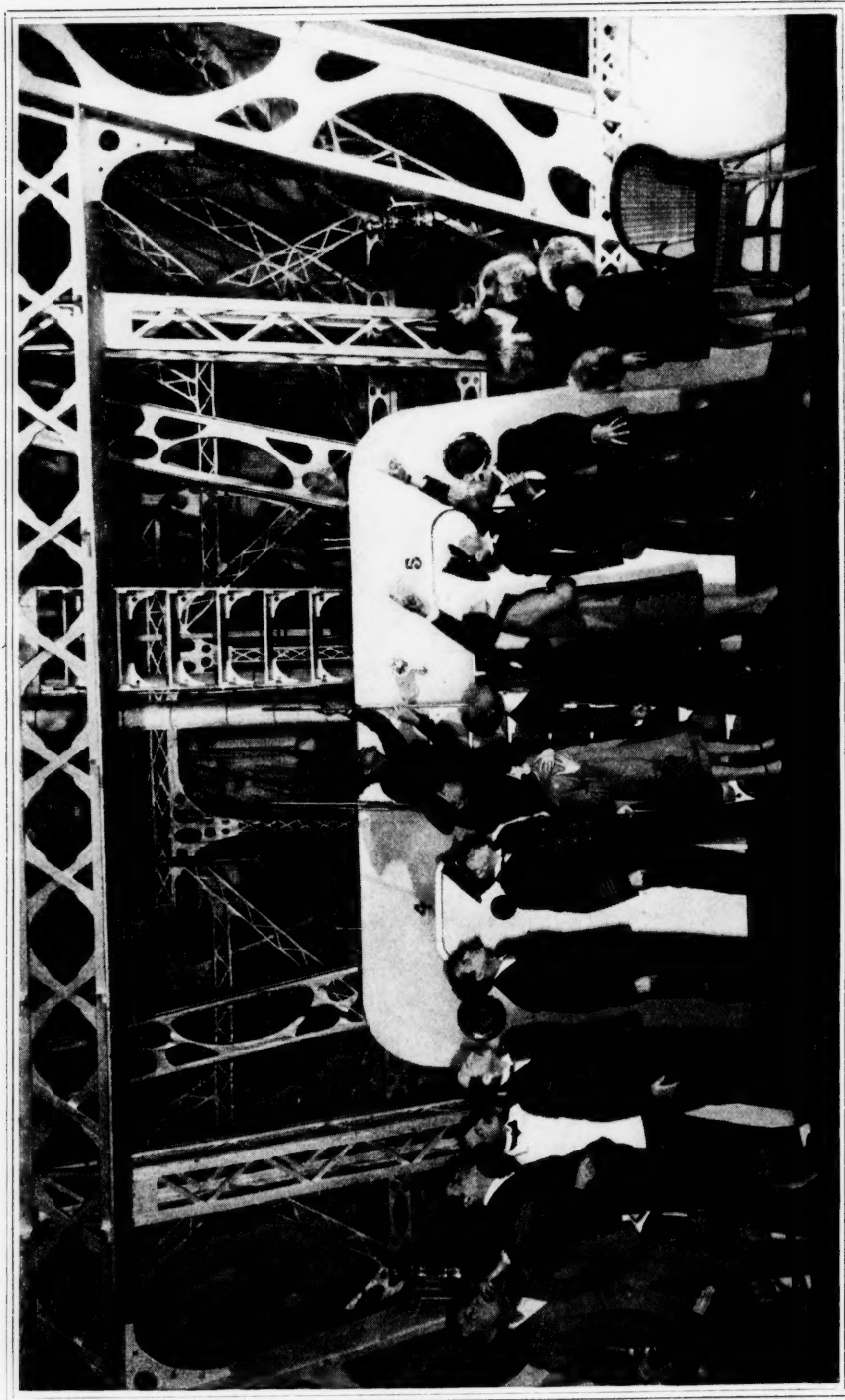


"Street Scene's," exact reproduction of an old brownstone apartment house front



"Fioretta" is rich in designs and groupings. Here is the silver gondola





"Zeppelin," a mystery thriller with startling mechanistic effects





nated by much red fire.

About the whole affair there was something warlike, and it was easy to sympathize with the startled gasp of one first nighter: "Good Heavens! We're in a tank!" But it was not until the curtain was raised and a glimpse was given of the gigantic machine which some particularly enterprising devil had constructed for the conversion of souls from good to evil that the true force of the Belasco conception struck one.

It is quite impossible to describe adequately, although it was literal enough. The set towered up out of sight like the work of some architect in steel gone mad. In the rear, far above the stage, great steel wheels revolved and steel plungers worked in and out. Electric arcs crackled and red clad devils ran up and down winding stairs to throw switches and — I suppose — oil the machinery. In front the jaws of steel doors opened and closed, revealing and hiding the scenes of the play. Steel columns shot up and supported immense frameworks.

It had all the appearance of such a machine as we may expect to see in fifty years, if long before that the machines have not ground us to nothing. It was not a simple machine, for the making of simple articles—it was more a machine for the sake of the machine. The conception, of course, is more than a little mad.

It became the madder when, at the end of the play, the machine tore itself to pieces in chagrin at having failed to turn good into evil. All the girders and the wheels came tumbling down in a really frightening fashion and amid great uproar. The devils fled, and one could sense an inclination on the part of some members of the audience to do likewise. But brave little Lenore stood her ground — she even scampered up through the fallen steelwork like a very pretty squirrel. So it was really a stage set after all, if a most unusual one.

The same rather mechanistic effect was obtained in "Zeppelin," a mystery thriller with a pleasant little plot about leprosy. In it the first act set is the interior of an airship in flight, with a great deal of steel showing and the clouds streaming by outside. Considerable illusion is created, but it is not until the whole affair tumbles down at the end of the second act that matters become really exciting. To make it the more nerve-racking, the collapse of the zeppelin is preceded by an explosion. The leper fires a pistol into the gas bags in a moment of annoyance.

The explosion is terrific, and every one jumps. It is simulated, I have learned since seeing the play, by firing several shotguns into a barrel. Even to New Yorkers, accustomed to blasting under their feet at all times by subway workers, it comes as something of a shock.

Having seen these two collapses, I rather waited as I watched Eugene O'Neill's "Dynamo" for the demolition of the power house set, which occupies the stage during the last act. It, also, employs much steel and many stairways, and on one side a dynamo purrs and moans fitfully. It does not fall down, but there are some pyrotechnics when the hero immolates himself on the poles of his dynamo goddess.

This Theater Guild structure is, on the whole, much the best of the season's iron work. It has cleanness, as well as magnitude; it is free from the turgidity which marks the Belasco set and the obvious trickiness of that in "Zeppelin." It is a fine combination of the literal and the symbolic; in some respects it is finer than the play.

These three sets are in themselves interesting, even without the action which takes place before them. Similarly was there some reason for attending the theaters which, in each case briefly, housed "A Play Without a Name" and "To-morrow," each hav-



ing had a set which needed very little play to help it. In neither case, however, was any play at all furnished, and the sets alone proved insufficient to insure popularity.

In "A Play Without a Name," as I have already reported, the surprised audience was granted a view of the inside of a man's skull. The contours were retained, there were eyes indicated and thoughts floated around a little vaguely while gray-clad figures worked levers and intoned. And in "To-morrow" there was ingenious use made of sliding sets, to say nothing of all sorts of devices which it may be expected our descendants, for their sins, will be called upon to manipulate a few hundred years hence.

The sliding sets—all fairly conventional interiors—were so constructed on belts that they might be drawn off to either side of the theater. Thus a library, full of actors, would suddenly start sliding off to the right, usually as one of the players walked through a door which led him into the study, which slid on from the left. A little later the library would cruise back again, refreshed by a rest in the wings, and the study would go off whence it came. On the opening night the affair was considerably brightened by the unreadiness of one actress for the move. With a look of consternation impossible to describe, she felt the floor move under her, noted her balance going, and struggled to regain it. After teetering for a moment on one foot she was successful.

Most of the really effective scenes of the season have combined architecture and action. This was notably the method in "Street Scene," about which every one has written so much and for the most part so enthusiastically. But the scene, designed by Jo Mielziner, was in itself unusually helpful in establishing the mood of the whole.

It was not so much, perhaps, in its building as in its selection that imagi-

nation played a part. It was the literal reproduction of the front of one of the old brownstone apartment houses which dot the city, and Mr. Mielziner did little more than reproduce with fine exactness. But in choosing precisely the right sort of building for the reproduction, the designer—or perhaps it was the author—showed a very fine ability to suggest the universal in terms of the particular.

The rising of the curtain brought a gasp of recognition from the members of the audience. The groupings in front of the set, the street details clustered around it—the ash cans and new buildings and signs marking the street as closed—gave verisimilitude from the start. It was that clear reflection of life—a reflection so clear and apparently so complete that only the subsequent analysis of memories could reveal the important part played by the selections the author has made—which, presumably, made of "Street Scene" the mecca it still is.

It is more the use of the human than the structural mass which makes "Harlem" pictorially memorable. The setting which pictures the interior of a flat in the negro district is no doubt accurate enough, but it is not until it is filled with the excitement of the party that it takes on distinction. Then there were gasps—some of them, probably, brought out by the startling frankness of the dancing of the members of the cast.

A Harlem "rent party," as you may know, is planned by the hosts as an affair more monetary than social. A fee is charged of each who attends, the amount usually being twenty-five cents. In addition, liquor and food are served at a price. The money so collected is used by the host to pay his rent. Any one may come who has the money, and the chief restrictions are on breaking of furniture, although there is a social compulsion against conduct so boisterous as to bring in the police. Anything else, apparently,

goes — although Harlem points out with some indignation that there are rent parties and rent parties, and that not all are orgies.

The one in the play, every one seems to agree, is a reproduction of one of the worst. But it is amazingly lively and interesting. All the members of the cast, with one exception, are negroes, and all those who take part in the dancing are colored. The stage is jammed, so that even did they wish the dancers could be little more than wrigglers. And they do not wish. The stage, as a result, has seldom seen anything less formal, more without restraint. It is a sociological, as well as a visual picture, and on either ground fascinating.

"Kibitzer," one of the newer plays to show some indications of permanence, also has crowded scenes, although the plotted action is in them more significant than in the "Harlem" parties. The interior of an Amsterdam Avenue cigar store is shown, with the entrances and exits of customers and the bickering excitement of the pinochle game in the corner. There is a newspaper and magazine rack, loaded with slightly worn periodicals, and the whole is to all intents literally the interior it pretends to be. In the last act — while *Lazarus* is in the full frenzy of his stock speculation and the ticker is going briskly — the scene takes on a wild turbulence and a flurry of movement exceeded, perhaps, only by that in "The Front Page."

This last, a newspaper melodrama, has been running since last summer. It gains much of its exciting quality from the spectacle of men running

around wildly and shouting in what purports to be — and what, you may take my word for it, very nearly is — a criminal courts pressroom. The set is exact, and to any newspaper man productive of nostalgic memories. Others, I suppose, must take it on faith.

The group scenes in "Wings Over Europe," the play about the atom which the Theater Guild sent on tour last March, were by comparison tranquil and stately. They were notable for balance and rhythmic direction more than for rapid movement, but they formed a perfect background for the talk which spun, sometimes so finely, around the stage.

There have been the usual run of musical productions, with the usual magnificence — and sometimes the magnificent tastelessness — of setting. About them, as the spring makes them thicker, I shall probably write more in detail. But in the present instance it is impossible to avoid noting the almost unexampled richness of some of the groupings and designs in "Fioretta," Earl Carroll's latest extravaganza. And it is hard to go further than to note them.

For they are simply the most exuberant of developments of the spectacular in the musical show. They are mounds of silks and satins, laces and paints and pretty girls. They are heaps of feathers and metal cloths and moons and blue skies and monumental staircases. And the response to them indicates that the public loves its pageantry. Certainly, so far as I could see, "Fioretta" gives its public little else.



#### VISION

Nor vision this—to find in each near day

A clear-limned worth, but looking o'er the years,

To see how much the gold outshone the gray,

How time makes good from ill, and joy from tears!

Arthur Wallace Peach



# The Streets of Shadow

*A serial—Part II—With the relentlessness of a bloodhound, Michael Brent follows a double-murder trail through the sinister underworld of Montreal!*

By Leslie McFarlane

## THE THREAD OF THE STORY



LONE at night, apparently at a trysting place, pretty Margaret Hilliard was shot to death in Mount Royal Park, Montreal!

Circumstantial evidence pointed to Hinky Lewis, who had been seen following the wealthy girl just

before she was killed, who had run from the scene of the crime, and who, when arrested, had had in his pocket a revolver, with one chamber discharged.

Lewis maintained he had no connection with the murder. His attorney, Michael Brent, was convinced of the prisoner's innocence, and undertook to clear him. Brent determined to inves-



She was a slatternly creature with suspicious eyes

tigate the case independently of the police, believing that the latter were interested chiefly in convicting his client.

The lawyer was an ambitious bachelor of thirty, who wore a beard to add dignity to his court room appearance. He visited the morgue as soon as he learned of the slaying, and arrived immediately after the girl's body had been identified by her housekeeper.

The housekeeper disclosed that Miss Hilliard had been secretly engaged to a poor young architect, Paul Gregory, so Brent went straight from the morgue to Gregory's apartment. There he was amazed to discover that the *fiancé* also had been killed, beaten on the head!

Hasty investigation of the room disclosed a fragment of a letter from Margaret, warning Paul not to go any more to No. 90, because it was a dangerous place.

By clever maneuvering Brent located a taxi driver who had taken

Gregory to the Chat Noir, a notorious underworld thoroughfare, but, despite a careful search, the lawyer was unable to find a No. 90 on the street.

On the Chat Noir, however, he caught sight of a winsome young lady escorted by an evil-looking bum. The girl, he learned later, was Norah Gray, just arrived from England.

The man was her stepfather, Midge Tapley, cocaine addict. Tapley had been living in the Montreal slums for some years, earning a precarious livelihood by toadying to Laboeuf, boss of the Chat Noir.

Shortly after Brent had passed her on the narrow, ugly street, Norah encountered Laboeuf, who tried to make love to her; but Burger, a cripple, saved her from harm.

Meanwhile, failing to find any clew to the Gregory-Hilliard case in the district, Brent returned to the murdered girl's housekeeper. From her he learned that Margaret had been courted also by Pelham Starr, a rich but dissolute and unwelcomed suitor.

The attorney then called upon Starr, who said Gregory had led a double life



and had been seen in the company of an underworld girl on the Chat Noir!

## CHAPTER XI

"CHERCHEZ LA FEMME"



MICHAEL BRENT did not stop in at the Fleur de Lis Tavern for his customary mug of dark beer—medium—that afternoon, and his crony, Mr. Dryborough, drank in solitary state, with a newspaper propped up before him.

It goes without saying that he was reading the latest news of the Hilliard-Gregory affair; it monopolized most of the front page and overflowed to the second, dribbling away on the third to a thin stream of conjectures and repetition.

The tragedy that had overtaken the wealthy girl and the struggling young architect gripped the public imagination, and the headlines flared. Detectives had grilled Hinky Lewis unmercifully, convinced that he had slain the girl, and that he was involved in the obscure human relationships behind the double crime, but the newspapers and the public sought a gaudier solution. This, they argued, was not the work of a skulking gunman seeking a purse. It went deeper than that.

Mr. Dryborough, like every one else who read the papers that morning, was passionately interested because he was deeply puzzled. Almost every paragraph raised a problem.

Why had the love of this young couple brought them separately to death? Was there one murderer or were there two? Was Hinky Lewis a killer or merely a sacrificial goat? What had happened in that dingy apartment before Paul Gregory went reeling to the floor with a broken skull? Who had lured Margaret Hilliard to the sinister rendezvous in the park?

It was one of those fascinating riddles that life periodically presents to

the mob, a riddle compounded of love and death, a riddle to which the answer might never be known.

Mr. Dryborough read everything the newspaper had to offer, and at the simultaneous conclusion of the final paragraph and the second mug of dark he was more bewildered than when he began. He waited in vain for Michael Brent, in the hope of gaining further information, and finally stalked off to his bookshop, muttering.

The lawyer, in fact, had completely forgotten the existence of Dryborough, the Fleur de Lis Tavern and dark beer, in his absorption after leaving Pelham Starr. He had learned much in the interview, and he was consumed by a rising excitement as he strode back toward the office. He had been right, after all. Chat Noir had not been a blind trail.

Somehow, he could not escape the impression that Pelham Starr knew more than he had cared to tell. Suspicions began to rise in his mind. Why had Starr talked so readily to him, when he had refused to talk to the police? It was quite possible, of course, that the man's explanation had been true—that his animosity toward the police was at the bottom of his discrimination in Brent's favor, but it was also possible that there were other and more obscure motives.

Brent found that a situation often became clarified through discussion, and to this end he frequently talked over details of his cases with his assistant, the indispensable Minton. That gentleman, besides being a superb listener, had an uncanny gift for pouncing on the one pearl of truth in a sea of legal verbiage, and a positive talent for discerning absurdities and contradictions. So when Michael Brent went into the office that morning he bade the faithful servant drop the labors in hand and listen.

Minton heard the tale of Brent's interview with Pelham Starr, judicially attentive.



"What do you think, Minty? Was Pelham Starr trying to draw a red hering across the trail?"

Minton polished his spectacles and permitted himself a stick of gum as an aid to thought.

"From what you have told me, Mr. Brent, I imagine the man has been quite honest with you," he said finally.

"I thought so, too. But when I began to think things over, I wondered. It seems strange that he is apparently the only person who has ever heard of Gregory's association with streetwalkers, and of his prowlings in the underworld, and particularly of his friendship with this mysterious woman in Chat Noir."

"On the surface, it might seem strange," Minton agreed, "but you must remember that he was the only person sufficiently interested in Gregory's private life to seek out these things. Gregory's closest friends would never know about them unless he betrayed himself in some way. It's very easy for a young man to lead that sort of a double life, as you might call it, in a big city."

Minton wagged his head portentously, as though his own prosaic and righteous existence might mask lurid depths for all Brent could tell.

"I suppose I shouldn't be so confidently suspicious, but the information Starr gave me seems too good to be true. That is, from the standpoint of clearing up these murders. I've been wondering if it wasn't all a gorgeous lie."

"It's a fact that there is no one to contradict it."

"That's what makes me suspicious. It's so airtight. Where did he get his information about Gregory? He didn't say. He builds up an excellent case against some unknown woman, although diligent police investigation has revealed no hint of this woman, no hint of any such affair in Gregory's life. I have no proof beyond his word, that any such woman ever existed."

Minton reached for a sheaf of papers on the desk.

"I took the liberty of clipping the latest newspaper stories about the affair," he said. "I pasted them up so you could look them over quickly. When you speak of this mysterious woman it reminds me that the police seem to be working along that angle now."

He handed Brent a sheet on which had been pasted a photograph clipped from a newspaper.

It was a picture of a girl. She was plump, of a full-blown prettiness, with dark eyes and a heavy mass of dark hair piled high on her head. It was a full face portrait, rather dark and smudgy in reproduction, and beneath it was an explanatory paragraph:

#### WHO IS THIS GIRL?

Police are seeking the original of this photograph, which was found in the apartment where the murdered body of Paul Gregory, young architect, was discovered yesterday morning. The photograph, lacking all identification marks, was in a bureau drawer and police attention has been concentrated on it in view of the fact that it was the only picture of a woman, among the dead man's effects, other than a large cabinet portrait of his murdered *fiancée*, Margaret Hilliard.

Michael Brent sniffed.

"Probably an old flame. Maybe a relative."

"Perhaps," agreed Minton. "But, being the *only* picture of another woman, it is interesting."

Brent paced restlessly about the office.

"We'll sum it up. Here we have a young man, in love with a girl above his social station in life. He is known to have been seen with suspicious characters. He telephones the girl and presumably asks her to meet him. She is murdered by some one who is aware of the meeting place. It would seem that the young man murdered her himself. Possible motive — she had discovered his philanderings, accused him,

and he killed her in anger. But we already know that she was aware of his visits to No. 90, wherever that may be. And we find that the young man was himself murdered at about the same time the girl met her death."

Minton looked helpless.

"I am utterly and completely at sea," said Brent, sitting down again. "Oh, Starr was right. He was right. Gregory was up to his neck in some affair—that seems certain. But why it should lead to two murders, I can't fathom. When that poor girl left the house to meet her lover, she was as good as dead."

"They say there's a woman back of almost every crime."

"*Cherchez la femme!* That's axiomatic. My own theory is that each murder was committed by a different person. Gregory was clubbed to death. The girl was shot. But there's a connection somewhere, and there's a woman somewhere. If we find her we can solve the whole business."

He picked up the sheet again and studied the photograph of the girl. "Pretty enough," he muttered, "but she's no raving beauty. Still, a photograph tells nothing. And if the police can't trace it, what chance have we? It's exasperating. There she is! *Who* is she? Above all, *where* is she?"

Brent was greatly agitated. Minton, accustomed to these outbursts when his employer was worried and bewildered, looked at him mildly.

"I think that is an old photograph."

"What makes you think that?"

"Most girls nowadays have their hair bobbed."

Brent gazed at the picture again.

"I must be slipping. How did I ever miss that? Sure, she has her hair dressed in the fashion of five years back." He flung the sheet back on the desk. "We can discount the picture. It's just one of Gregory's relatives or else an old sweetheart. If it were his lady friend of Chat Noir she would have bobbed hair, that's certain, for

that kind can't afford to stay five years behind the times."

"Speaking of Chat Noir—you said you were down there yesterday looking for No. 90."

"Yes, and there is no No. 90."

"But Mr. Starr claims Gregory called on a woman in that street, and it appears to check with what the taxi drivers told you."

"Yes. That was one circumstance that led me to believe Starr was telling the truth. He had no idea that I knew of Gregory's visits to Chat Noir." Brent was full of enthusiasm again. "It all comes back to that confounded street! The whole solution is down there, somewhere, and I'm going to find it, No. 90 or not!"

"Of course there was nothing to indicate that No. 90 was on Chat Noir at all," Minton reminded him. "It was only a guess on your part, and it appears to have been wrong. It has confused the issue a bit, in my opinion. Perhaps if you forget about that number for the time being and concentrate on the street as a whole, you might be further ahead."

"Oh, I'm going back there. Somewhere on that street there is a woman who knows the inside story of those murders, and I'll find her if I have to question every trollop on Chat Noir."

"Perhaps the police—"

Minton wilted under Brent's glare.

"The police! Bah! I've tackled this thing alone, and I'll stay with it. I'm not going to hand over my information to the police and say, 'Please, kind sirs, this is too deep for me. I've bitten off more than I can chew. Won't you help me?' And if they fell down on the job, what would they do? They'd keep their mouths shut, and settle down to making the most of their case against Hinky Lewis, my client. If they clear up the mystery before I do, the more power to them, but I'll play my lone hand to the finish."

Minton coughed apologetically.

"I hadn't thought of it in that light."

"I'm going to find that woman, and I'm going to learn something more about Pelham Starr. I'm not altogether satisfied yet about that young man. I think he told me some facts and some lies. That remark he made about hoping I cleared up the Hilliard murder and not the other, sticks in my mind."

"It may have been just his ill temper. He made it clear that he had no love for Gregory. And, after all, he didn't say he hoped you wouldn't clear up the Gregory end of the case. He just meant that he was indifferent."

"Still, he quarreled with Gregory. There's just a chance that Mr. Pelham Starr may have been drawing a red herring across a trail that could lead unpleasantly close to himself."

"There's a possible motive, no doubt."

"It's the only definite motive, slim as it is, that I've run across so far, and I can't afford to overlook it. I'm going back to Chat Noir."

He was eager to get back to the unsavory street. His eagerness was not wholly based on a desire to learn more about Paul Gregory's mysterious visits to the neighborhood. Although he would not admit it to himself, there was a persistent hope that he might again see the girl he had encountered on Chat Noir the previous day.

## CHAPTER XII

### A SURE THING



MIDGE borrowed some money from Norah and treated her to breakfast at a little restaurant on the Main.

"My boss won't be payin' me until to-night," he explained. "I'm a bit short of cash, but I'll pay it back to you, Norah."

"I wish you would take it all, and let us move away from here."

"We'll see about that. I'll look around. Of course, it don't do for a man to throw up his job when he ain't got nothin' else in sight. Montreal is a hard city, Norah. It ain't always easy to get work. But, as I was tellin' you yesterday, I've got somethin' in mind if I can get a bit of capital to swing it, and I'll see the man this very day. Seein' it's your money, I want to be careful."

"I suppose I could go to work. I don't like to be idle."

"That's the spirit," he said approvingly. "We'll look over the advertisements in the papers some of these days. Just for now, I think you'd best take a good rest for a week or so."

"There's so little for me to do. I hate staying around the lodging house all day."

"Just be patient. Be patient, gal. We'll get settled down a little better after a while. If this deal I'm thinkin' of works out all right, we'll be able to do more for ourselves."

"What kind of a deal is it?"

"An investment. I don't rightly know what kind of a business it is, for the man didn't say. I was talkin' to this chap a few days ago, and he said if I had any money to spare he could put me in the way of doublin' it overnight."

"The stock market?" she said, dubiously. "I don't think it's safe—"

"Oh, no," said Midge, shocked. "Not the stock market. I ain't such a fool as to go in for that game. Unless you're on the inside, they just robs you. No, this is a sure thing. I'll find out about it to-day."

So far as it went, Midge was telling the truth. He failed to mention that the philanthropic gentleman who was to double his money overnight was a chance acquaintance he had met in the corner tavern, a derby-hatted, red-faced person with a startling taste in neckties and waistcoats, a fascinating individual who could perform dexterous feats with coins and cards.

Over a friendly quart of beer this gifted artist had confided that he had entertained vaudeville audiences from coast to coast for several years, under the billing of "Mr. Mysto, the Man Who Puzzles You." Unfortunately, Mr. Mysto had toppled from grace between the supper show and the evening performance of his first day in Montreal, and had been permitted to puzzle local audiences no longer, inasmuch as he had not sobered up for two days.

Short-sighted and narrow-minded moguls of the profession had canceled the remainder of his time, and Mr. Mysto had decided to repay this injustice by depriving vaudeville of his presence for a while.

There were, he confided, ways and means whereby his gifts could be utilized in private life to pecuniary advantage. Thereupon, Mr. Mysto winked shrewdly, produced a pack of cards from his pocket, shuffled them and nonchalantly extracted four aces.

Midge gaped. He saw the possibilities of Mr. Mysto's talent at once. His newfound friend then confided his intentions of invading a few of the gambling houses on the Main and generously offered to steer Midge in the way of a good thing should he care to put up an investment of a hundred dollars or more.

As Midge had something less than a hundred cents to his name at the time, he had been obliged to decline, but Mr. Mysto, under the influence of his third quart within the hour, professed warm affection and eternal friendship, promising that the offer would hold good for the duration of his stay in the neighborhood.

Accordingly, Midge left Norah to return to the lodging house alone and hastened back to the tavern where he had met the gentleman of talent. As luck would have it, Mr. Mysto, looking somewhat the worse for wear, was sitting by himself at a corner table. The derby hat was tilted at a less

jaunty angle, and he was wearing the same gay waistcoat and the same remarkable necktie, regrettably stained with beer. He nodded gloomily to Midge.

"And how," inquired Midge, "have things been going?"

"So-so," returned the artist, tilting his glass. "Are you going to buy a drink?"

"Certainly," said Midge, like a gentleman, and held up two fingers. Mr. Mysto brightened up perceptibly.

"I don't suppose you heard about the rotten break I got last night."

"What was that?"

Mr. Mysto leaned confidentially forward. "I got in a game up at a dive a few blocks away and cleaned up. I guess I must 'a' been more'n a grand ahead, and what do you think hadda happen?"

"The cops come in."

"No. The cops don't come into this place. A couple of guns stuck me up on my way back to my room. Can you beat it? Took all the jack I had won. They even got my watch."

"Ain't that tough!" sympathized Midge.

"I would 'a' been sittin' on top of the world right now if them two lads had laid off. Ain't that a hell of a note? And here I am back where I started, without even a sawbuck to edge into the crap game in the back room."

The waiter served their beer. Midge paid. Mr. Mysto gulped long and loudly, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, then continued querulously:

"Damn if I can see why I deserve a piece of rotten luck like that. It took me two days to crash that joint, and just when I was sittin' pretty, this had to happen. Not even masked. They stood me up against a wall, and one of 'em held a rod on me while the other guy took the collection. I must have a jinx."

Midge listened sympathetically to the tale of woe, and after Mr. Mysto's



spirits began to revive under the influence of the beer, he broached the subject in hand.

"I think," he said, cautiously, "I can put up a bit of money, like you was askin' me the other day."

"How much?" asked Mysto with interest.

"It all depends. I'd have to know more about how you plan to use it. Maybe I could raise as much as fifty dollars."

"Fifty! Don't be a piker. You double your money on a sure thing."

"Well, then, a hundred."

"That's better. And for my end, all I want is ten bucks to buy my first stack. Your hundred will help me make plenty, but I give you it back and an extra hundred besides."

Midge licked his lips. "Fair enough," he said. "But what if you lose?"

"I don't lose. That's the beauty of it."

"If it's in a card game you *might* lose. If you couldn't lose, you'd be a millionaire," insisted Midge, reasonably enough.

"I tell you, friend, this is a sure thing. A sure thing. And the reason I ain't a millionaire is because you can only work this sure thing once in a game, and only once in the same company. Look! I'll show you."

Out came the pack of cards again. Mr. Mysto lowered his voice.

"You're the only man around here that knows I'm handy with the pasteboards, see. If it ever got around, why I wouldn't get into no more games. But I'll show you, because I know you're a man that can keep his mouth shut. Now watch!"

He shuffled the cards, then flicked them out on the table in four separate five-card hands.

"Suppose I'm sittin' in a poker game, and it's my deal, and there's four other guys at the table. Well, there's the way I'd deal 'em. You didn't see anything phony, did you?"

"No!"

"Well, then, look." Mr. Mysto turned up the cards. His own hand consisted of the ten, jack, queen, king, and ace of hearts. There was no need to look at the other hands. Mysto's was unbeatable.

"Cripes!"

"Ain't that a sure thing?" asked Mysto softly.

Midge rubbed his chin with his knuckles. "There couldn't be anything surer than that," he admitted. "How do you do it? Are the cards stacked? Could you do it with another deck?"

"I can do it with any deck. It's all a matter of trainin'. Shuffle 'em yourself!"

Midge shuffled the cards and handed them back. Mr. Mysto then shuffled them once more, explaining that the trick could be accomplished only on his own deal. Out flicked the cards. He dealt himself another royal flush.

Midge was convinced.

"Can you get into a game to-night?"

"Yes. I met a guy who says he'll bring me up to another joint. La-pierre's."

"I know the place. But where does my hundred come in?"

"Listen," said Mr. Mysto expansively. "I'll tell you what I'll do. Give me a ten spot to start me in this game to-night, and when I'm ready to deal myself the unbeatable hand I'll give you the high sign. You can give me the hundred before the game if you like, or you can slip it to me then, just to show everythin's fair and above-board. You can stand behind my chair and see the hand for yourself, and then slip me the jack. I'll bet it for you. That's all I do. I bet it for you. The hand can't be beat. I win the pot and you double your money. Unless, of course, everybody else checks out and nobody calls me or raises me, but *that* ain't likely. Could anything be fairer than that?"

"No," said Midge. "Nothin' could be fairer than that. I'll get the money right away."

"If you can get more than a hundred, bring it along. I'll bet it for you just the same, and you'll double it. You can see yourself that you haven't a chance in the world of losing. It's a sure thing if ever there was one."

"I don't have to give you the money until I see the cards in your hand?"

"No. You can't lose."

"And all you want is ten dollars?"

Midge could not rid himself of the impression that there was a catch in this munificent offer somewhere.

"Ten bucks to get into the game. By the time I'm ready to deal myself the royal flush I should have that ten spot built up so high that I'll make a killing on the big hand. I'm not worrying about *my* end of it. I'll let you share in it just for get-away money."

Midge finished his beer.

"Do you want the ten right away?"

"Right away."

"Sure you won't spend it?" Midge asked cautiously.

"Say, listen!" demanded Mr. Mysto with an injured air. "What do you think I am anyway? A crook? Here I just go and let you in on a sure thing, just because you're a friend of mine, and you're afraid to trust me with a ten."

"I didn't mean that," said Midge hastily. "I'll go and get it right now."

"I'll wait here," Mr. Mysto growled.

Midge left the tavern and returned to the lodging house. He found Norah sitting on the front steps, playing with two of the children of the neighborhood, ragged, dirty-faced youngsters who were as shy as savages, but she had contrived to win their confidence and was laughing with them as though she had known them for years. She was a friendly little thing, and although her pleasant "good morning" to the landlady had been rewarded

with a glare of surprised suspicion, the youngsters had proved more amenable to her good nature.

Swiftly, then, Midge explained that he had seen the man of whom he had spoken, that by great good luck the offer was still open, and that he needed ten dollars at once to bind the bargain.

"It's a business deal," he lied glibly. "He's buyin' a bit of property that he can sell to-night and double his money, and he says I can come in on it, seein' he's a friend of mine."

"How much more will it take?"

"As much as you can spare, Norah. I had to promise him I'd put in a hundred dollars anyway, but if you've got more than that I'd put it all in. We can't lose. It's a sure thing. You'll have the money back to-morrow morning—doubled."

"Are you quite sure it's safe?"

"Would I advise you to put up your money if I thought there was any chance of losin' it?" asked Midge. "It's a sure thing, I tell you. There ain't no chance of losin'. I know about these things, Norah, and I never heard of anythin' surer than this. It would be a crime to let it go by."

She yielded at last to his persuasions, went up to her room and returned with her purse. She kept only a few dollars for herself and gave Midge the rest.

"A hundred and sixty," said Midge, counting the money. "That means we can put in a hundred and fifty, not countin' the ten he wants now. This time to-morrow mornin' we'll have three hundred dollars. It's a pity we ain't got more."

He scuttled off, thrusting the money into his pocket.

Norah sat on the steps, the purse in her lap. The children, who were afraid of Midge, had withdrawn. Norah fingered the few remaining bills. One hundred and sixty dollars was a lot of money, but the sum had not seemed so great when she knew it was all she had in the world. However, possession of the plump little roll of bills had given

her a feeling of security; now she was suddenly afraid.

After all, money was important. What if Midge were wrong? What if he lost her little fortune? They would have to stay on in this poor lodging house, in this dreadful street, and poverty would stalk at their heels. This thought frightened her.

A footstep on the stairs aroused her. She moved aside to let a lodger go by, and then looked up when a throaty voice said: "Mornin', miss."

It was Burger. He was the same homely figure of the previous afternoon, his appearance in nowise beautified by the puffy and swollen black eye. The helpless arm hung limply by his side. He was an ugly and repellent figure, but there was something respectful in his manner and something kindly in his voice. Then she remembered the man as he had been the previous night, his humble gratitude as she bathed his bruised face, and she smiled at him.

"How's the eye?"

He stepped down onto the pavement.

"It's all right. It don't hurt—since you fixed it up."

"I'm awfully grateful to you for saving me from that brute."

Burger looked uncomfortable, and shuffled uneasily.

"He didn't know who you were, or I guess he wouldn't have bothered you. But he's a bad actor. I'm glad I came along."

"I was frightened to death," she told him earnestly, her delicate chin up-tilted and her eyes wide.

"He's kinda used to havin' his own way around here. Everybody is scared of him. I think he's cuckoo."

"Cuckoo?"

"Crazy," explained Burger. "We can't say much, for Laboeuf runs things in this street, and he's a bad guy to cross, but I think he's nuts. Them dogs of his scare the livin' tripe out of everybody, and he thinks it's a great joke. There's plenty would shoot the

brutes if they dared. But Laboeuf is boss, see? I suppose you know he's Midge's boss?"

Norah was startled.

"My stepfather works for that man?"

"Didn't he tell you? I guess he was scared to, after last night. Yeah, he works for Laboeuf. That was why he didn't dare put up no argument when he took you away from Laboeuf. He's afraid of him."

"But what kind of work does he do?"

Burger rubbed his stubbly chin. "I guess Midge 'll have to tell you that. But if you don't mind me tellin' you somethin', miss, I wouldn't stay around here any longer'n you can help."

"I don't like living here. But I suppose it's all my stepfather can afford."

Burger looked at her strangely. "It's been a long time since you seen him last, huh?"

"More than five years."

"Well—you know him better'n I do, and it's none of my business, but if you can get him to move away you'll be better off. This ain't a good neighborhood for a nice girl like you."

"I've asked him to move somewhere else."

"And what did he say?"

"He said we couldn't go just now, but when things got better—"

"Keep harpin' on it, miss. Midge 'll stay here till the crack of doom if you let things ride. Get me? Make him move. He'll stick unless you pry him loose. If he won't go, why you pack up and go anyway, and maybe that 'll waken him up. Don't think I'm buttin' in, kid, but it's for your own good."

"You see," she faltered, "I don't know any one else in Canada. I have no friends and no relatives but him. I have to stay with him. There's no place for me to go."

"You can always get a job, and

there's worse things than bein' alone. Of course, maybe Midge'll brace up now that he's gotta look after you, but don't let him put anythin' over on you." Burger looked down at the toes of his shabby boots. "Not that I'm runnin' him down, or anythin', but the less you stick around this part of town, the better, see?"

He looked around, nervously, as though fearing he may have been overheard.

"I gotta be goin' now. Listen, you won't spill any of this to Midge, will you?"

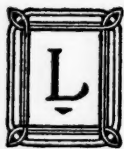
"You mean, I'm not to tell him?"

"Don't say nothin'. If he thought I was talkin' to you he might be sore." Burger began to edge away. "I'm just tippin' you off because I hate to see—well—I don't like to see you livin' around here, for you're too good—I mean, it ain't your class at all—"

He shuffled off down the street. Norah watched him go; she had an impulse to run after him, to question him, to ask him to explain more about her stepfather, about Laboeuf, about the dangers at which he had hinted. But he went away, and she sat there on the steps, fumbling at the worn purse in her lap, the purse that was now so thin and empty. Chat Noir, even in the clear morning sunlight, seemed more sinister than ever.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DEAD HAND



LAPIERRE'S place was a dingy apartment over a dry-goods store on the Main. It was only a small gambling joint ignored by the bigger fry among the gambling fraternity because it was reputedly in constant danger of being "knocked over" by the police and its clientele was largely of the tourist variety, steered there by taxicab drivers and hackmen.

However, one could usually find a

moderate game in progress, and chips could be purchased reasonably. Mr. Mysto, accompanied by a friend whom he introduced as Levy, met Midge in the corner tavern shortly after nine o'clock that night and the three set out.

Levy was a short, fat little Jew with greasy hair. Midge took an instant dislike to him, and Levy, on his part, paid Midge scant attention.

"C'mon," the Jew said. "It ain't everybody can get into this place, y' understand, unless they got somebody wit' 'em, but any frien' of mine is welcome."

Mr. Mysto bestowed a surreptitious wink upon Midge, for whom a great light promptly dawned. He astutely divined that Levy was a touter for Lapierre's place, and Mysto was playing the rôle of the lamb, innocently eager for the slaughter. Midge shook with inward laughter. If Levy only knew!

There was a poker game in progress at Lapierre's place when they arrived, obtaining admittance after an impressive series of signals in the way of knocks and double knocks at the outer door, and Mysto played the part of sucker to perfection. Levy clapped him on the back, introduced him to Lapierre, and extolled his merits as a good fellow, while Mysto chafed with evident impatience to get into the game. Midge, when he said he had come only to look on, was ignored.

"If they only knew he ain't got no more than ten dollars in his pockets they'd sing a different tune," opined Midge.

Before he sat in, Mysto sidled over to his financial backer. "Do you want to slip me the dough now or when I get the big mitt?" he whispered.

"D'you think you'd better have it now?"

"They might see you slippin' me the jack and raise a row. If you give it to me now I'll put it in this pocket, see," and he slapped the left hand pocket of his trousers, "and play it when the time comes."



Midge gave him the money and Mysto counted it.

"A hundred and fifty. Good! That means three hundred for you when I win with the big hand."

Mr. Mysto pocketed the bills and plunged into the game.

Any wavering doubts Midge might have had as to Mysto's ability to invade a game on limited capital swiftly vanished when his friend won the first

faces were gray and expressionless; they glanced at one another occasionally, confining their brief words solely to the game.

One was a thin, misanthropic individual with high cheek bones and a



His skull seemed to crack into fragments

hand with three queens and raked in a pot that must have amounted to thirty dollars. The game was draw, and there were four others at the table, but shortly after Mysto's entry one of the players dropped out, penniless. Levy slipped into the vacant chair.

Midge almost hugged himself with elation. The touter, in all probability a card sharp, planned to participate in the spoils. He thought Mysto would be easy pickings, eh! He would get his fingers burned. The poetic justice of the situation delighted Midge beyond measure. He looked forward with keen anticipation to Levy's downfall at the hands of the man he had sought to entrap.

The room was heavy with smoke. The players were in their shirt sleeves, but they kept their hats on, and each puffed at a cigar or cigarette. Their

prominent Adam's apple above his rumpled collar. Another was young and pimply-faced, with stubby fingers. The man beside him was a ponderous, slow-moving fellow with pallid countenance and a heavy black mustache.

The misanthropic man had been winning until Levy entered the game, and then his luck turned. However, he was cautious, and tossed in his cards frequently after the deal, refusing to stay on anything but a strong opening hand.

Levy, apparently, had stolen his luck. He won three big pots in succession, then lost heavily when he put too much faith in the strength of a small straight as opposed to Mr. Mysto's two-card draw. When Levy finally called he found that Mysto's confidence had been well founded, and a full house won the substantial pot. Midge slapped his knee appreciatively. Levy glowered at him.

More men entered the place; some

sat in at another game in the next room; others looked on; a few idled about the little bar in the kitchen.

Midge placed himself directly behind Mr. Mysto's chair and watched the rise and fall of his companion's fortunes. The gentleman of talent was not attempting any sleight of hand as yet, so far as Midge could see, but his luck was consistently good, and he played his cards well.

Half an hour passed. The place was dim with smoke. Voices droned. Cards flickered under the green-shaded light. Midge was tired, but he was afraid of losing his position behind Mysto's chair, for there were more onlookers now.

Levy and Mr. Mysto were the heavy winners. The sad-faced man was almost broke, despite his caution. Time and again he was nosed out of the pot by a narrow margin. The pallid fellow caressed his mustache and seemed to be holding his own. The pimply-faced youth skirted insolvency several times, but had an uncanny faculty for holding a winning hand just when it appeared that he was about to succumb.

At last Mr. Mysto casually scratched his left ear, the signal that he was about to exercise his peculiar talent. It was his deal. Midge tried to appear bored. The cards flicked about the table, so swiftly that one could scarcely follow the rapid motions of the white fingers.

Mysto laid aside the deck and picked up his hand, cupping the cards. There was a jack on top. One by one the others edged into view as Mysto separated them. The ace was next. Then the ten. Then the king, and finally the queen.

Midge gulped.

The fellow was right. He had dealt himself the unbeatable hand.

Ten, jack, queen, king and ace. All diamonds. A royal flush—pat!

It was miraculous. If only the others stayed in to fight it out. What

a profitable slaughter this would be!

They stayed. Mysto raised the initial bet and still they stayed.

"Cards?"

Levy drew three, and sat back, his face expressionless. The sad man asked for one; the fellow with the mustache drew two and the pimply-faced youth took three.

"I'll play these," said Mysto.

The sad man raised his eyebrows and looked reflectively at the dealer. Mustache bet a dollar and Levy promptly raised. The sad man put down his cards with a sigh, but the pimply young man was a glutton for punishment and stuck with the ship. Mysto raised again. Mustache peered down into his hand and met the raise, but Levy boosted it once more. The pimply youth decided that he had enough, and when Mysto again raised he looked vastly relieved that he had dropped out when he did.

"I guess you have 'em," Mustache muttered and dropped out.

"Gotta show me," said Levy, and came back with another raise.

Mysto hesitated. "See you and bump you again."

Levy nodded. "How much?"

Mysto thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out the roll of bills. "A hundred and fifty bucks to say I beat you."

Levy counted the money, peeled an equal sum from a fat wad of bills, met the raise and called:

"It's a shame to take you like this," said Mysto.

"Show 'em."

The gentleman of talent flung down his hand.

"Nobody can beat 'em," he said quietly, and reached for his winnings.

"Hey—hold on!" Levy rose halfway out of his chair. "You can't take anything with that hand."

"Why not? It's a royal flush, ain't it?"

"The hell it is! You dealt yourself an extra card."

Levy thrust aside Mysto's hand. There lay the royal flush, but there also lay a seven of clubs, peeping out from beneath the ten.

Mysto's mouth opened. The other players leaned forward. The sad-faced man shook his head.

"One too many, brother."

"But I *had* 'em, I tell you!" protested Mysto. "I never saw that seven. It musta been lyin' on the table."

"Nope!" grumbled Mustache. "It wasn't lyin' on the table. It's all in your hand."

The pimply youth clucked sympathetically.

"Too bad," he said. "A royal flush ruined. On your own deal. You give yourself one too many."

"Well, it was the last card!" declared Mysto. "It don't count. I had the flush before I got the seven. The cards must 'a' been stuck together. It was on the bottom. My flush still holds good."

"It does like hell!" snapped Levy. "You can't pull anythin' like that around here. It's a dead hand. I win the pot."

"How do you get that way? You couldn't beat my royal flush."

"I can't beat a royal flush, but I can beat a dead hand, no matter what cards I got."

"We all oughta get our money back," ventured the pimply-faced young man.

"Bull!" said Levy, emphatically. "It's a dead hand, and he and I was the only ones in. I get the pot. That's the rules."

The sad-faced man nodded.

"It's the rules, all right."

"I don't believe it," declared Mysto.

Levy called Lapierre. The gambling house proprietor heard the case and scratched his head dubiously.

"I never heard of anyt'ing like dat before. But I t'ink M'sieu' Levy is right. Wait. I got a book."

He went out into the kitchen and

the argument was resumed. Two or three of the onlookers joined in. Some supported Levy, but one thought everybody should get their money back. Midge squeaked a mild word in favor of Mysto, but no one heard him. Lapierre returned with his book—a paper bound edition of Hoyle.

The authority covered the situation. Levy, it appeared, was right. The extra card rendered Mysto's hand dead and Levy was entitled to the pot.

"I told you so," he grunted, and raked in his winnings, which included the side bet. "After this, count your cards, friend."

Midge was utterly dazed. He turned away as the game was resumed. Mysto, after a great deal of grumbling, had decided to continue. Midge stumbled toward the door, left the flat, and went down the stairs into the street.

He shivered, but not because the night was cool.

Three hundred dollars! It had lain right there before him, to all intents and purposes his, and his alone. Now the fat, velvety wad of bills reposed in Levy's pocket.

"It's mine, by rights," mumbled Midge.

Mysto, the infallible, had blundered. One little slip, and the unbeatable hand had been beaten.

"How in hell did he ever come to do a thing like that? Pick up an extr'y card! Gawd! And the money as good as in my purse."

People jostled him as he shuffled down the Main, and some cursed when he blundered against them, scarcely seeing where he was going. He paid no attention, muttering to himself:

"It's always the way. I've never been lucky. Somethin' always happens. There couldn't have been nothin' surer than that. Nothin'. And somethin' had to happen."

He entered Chat Noir. Head down, hands thrust deep in his pockets, he went down the dark street until he was a few doors away from the lodg-

ing house, and then he turned abruptly and vanished into the depths of a black little alley.

So far it had not occurred to him that the real loser was Norah. In a vague way he knew he would have to make some explanation to cover the disappearance of her money, but this did not greatly bother him. The gall and wormwood was in the blow to his own pride; he had thought himself sufficiently shrewd to "put one over" on Lapierre's poker game, and something had gone wrong.

#### CHAPTER XIV

##### THE BOSS OF CHAT NOIR



MIDGE TAPLEY ascended a rickety flight of wooden steps leading to the rear veranda of a house at the rear end of the alley. There were no lights in evidence when he shuffled up to the door and rapped three times sharply.

A woman's voice said: "Who's there?"

"It's me. Midge."

The door opened. The woman, sullen and slovenly, stood there. She had once been beautiful, and although she was not yet old, the flame and the spirit of youth had left her. She had dark, tragic eyes, a discouraged mouth. Her thick black hair was untidy.

"Where's Laboeuf?"

She gestured toward the next room. Midge went in.

He found Laboeuf, boss of Chat Noir, just finishing a late supper. He glanced up indifferently and growled a surly greeting.

"Got anything for me?" asked Midge.

Laboeuf looked surprised.

"What? You look for work?"

"I need some money, right away."

Laboeuf grunted.

"So? Maybe I find somet'ing for you."

He picked up a match from the

table, thrust it between his big, strong teeth and stared at Midge reflectively.

"That girl," he said. "Is she really your daughter, eh?"

A crafty expression crept into Midge's eyes. So Laboeuf was interested!

"She's my gal," he answered. "I married her old woman."

Laboeuf grunted.

"What are you going to do with her?"

Midge shrugged. "Dunno. Get her a job somewhere, I guess."

"If she wants work," suggested Laboeuf, "send her to me."

Nervously, Midge groped for a cigarette.

"Not that kind of work," he said.

Laboeuf spat the match viciously from his mouth. "Are you sure she's your girl?" he grinned.

The cigarette drooped sullenly. "Yes. She's all right. You ain't got no chance there, Mr. Laboeuf."

The big man swung his feet from the table, stood up and stretched his arms as he yawned. On the wall his shadow was like an enormous cross.

"I guess maybe she'll do what she likes," he growled. Then he stared at Midge again until the little man became uncomfortable and chewed the cigarette to a pulp. Little flecks of tobacco dribbled over his lower lip.

Then Laboeuf said: "I see you hangin' around to-day wit' that fellow who says his name is Mysto. What game are you up to wit' him?"

"We had a little deal on."

"How comes he let you work in wit' him?"

"He's a friend of mine."

Laboeuf flung back his head and laughed uproariously, his eyes squinted, his mouth wide open. "So!" he said. "A friend? Did he show you card tricks?"

Midge knew better than to lie to Laboeuf. The boss of Chat Noir had an uncanny way of knowing nearly everything that went on in his bailiwick.



"Yes." Then Midge's grievance surged up. "We would 'a' made some money, too, if things had only gone right."

"You?" sneered Laboeuf.

"Yes, me! Mysto and me was workin' together on somethin' that would 'a' made me a nice piece of change. It was a sure thing, so it was. I tell you, Mr. Laboeuf, that fellow is smart. He can make the cards eat outa his hand, so he can. We had it all doped out together and he was to make a hundred and fifty bucks for me to-night over at Lapierre's."

"How?"

"He can do tricks, this Mysto. When it's his own deal there ain't nothin' he can't do, and he does it smart. He used to be on the stage. When he wants to, he can deal himself a royal flush, and to-night I raised me some money, and Mysto, bein' as he's a friend of mine, bet it for me when he dealt himself a royal flush, see? It was a sure thing, but I don't know what went wrong—he slipped up somehow and give himself a card too many. And I lost. Every cent I had in the world."

Laboeuf slapped his thigh, delightedly.

"And you lost?" he roared. "And you lost your money, perhaps, to a Jew named Levy, eh?"

Midge nodded. "All I had. A hundred and fifty."

Laboeuf chuckled.

"And yet you do not know how it was done?"

"It was an accident. Mysto give himself an extra card by mistake. He lost a lot of money, too."

Laboeuf clucked his tongue sympathetically.

"*Triste!*" he muttered. "It breaks my heart." And then, as Midge detected a mocking note, Laboeuf roared savagely: "You fool! You live here in Chat Noir for one, two, how many years? And you learn nothing. You are a worse sucker than any the taxi

drivers bring down from the big hotels."

"How?" Midge was gaping pathetically.

"I am ashamed that I have anybody work for me who is so damn stupid. Look! I know this Mysto. He is a crook. He come into a card game that I run, last night. He does his stuff, and he is smart, but he does not fool me. When he go, I tell Emil, and Emil goes out by the back way and meets this Mysto and takes away from him all the money he won. There were a lot of suckers in the place that night, so I get it all, and Mysto is another sucker, because all the time I just let things ride, so he is working for me and does not know it, and because he thinks he is cheating me, I take his money and pay him nothing."

Midge wagged his head admiringly. "He was tellin' me about that. He thinks it was an ordinary stick-up."

Laboeuf snorted. "I know a few tricks he does not know yet. And as for him and Levy, they are working together, but some of these nights something is going to happen."

"How do you mean, workin' together?"

"Bah! Why should I tell you? Mysto finds a sucker like you and shows him how he can deal himself a hand nobody can beat, and he says he will bet your money for you. A sure thing! Don't you know yet that nothing is sure, where somebody is going to make money for you, except that he is going to make some for himself. You went into that game, Mysto and Levy are working with Lapierre, and they win easy, and then Mysto deals himself the big hand. But he hides the other card from you, or else he picks it up when everybody else is busy watching the bets. And what happens? He loses. Levy wins, and to-night they split your hundred and fifty and Levy curses Mysto for getting drunk and picking a cheap sucker like you instead of a big one."

The scathing contempt in Laboeuf's voice made Midge's ears burn. He realized now how completely he had been duped by the plausible Mysto.

"I'll get that dirty blighter!" he gritted. "I'll get him—"

"Shut up! You get nobody. You have lost. It is a lesson. Now I have work for you, and after this do not believe people when they say they will make money for you. If you do your work well for me you will not have to worry about money."

Midge brightened up at this.

"What's on?"

Laboeuf leaned across the table, his heavy knuckles pressed against the wood, his bold eyes gleaming. "There is a man," he said, "who wants to know things. A dick, I think, but I am not sure. He is a strange man who wears a beard and a black hat, and he came to Chat Noir yesterday looking for numbers. And when he saw there was not any No. 90 on Chat Noir he went away."

"A dick, huh?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. I want to know."

"Seems to me I saw that guy," said Midge reflectively. "I'm tryin' to remember. Seems to me he was on the street when I was comin' home with Norah yesterday. Black whiskers and a big hat. That was him."

"You would know him if you saw him again?"

"Sure."

"I want you to keep your eyes open for this man. If you see him around here again, tail him."

"All right."

"If he's askin' questions, I want something to happen to this fellow."

"You want him beat up? You know I don't go in for that kind of work, Mr. Laboeuf," whined Midge. "I ain't got the size, nor the strength."

"You are yellow, you mean," Laboeuf said contemptuously.

"I'm not yellin'," Midge retorted, showing his teeth. "But if there's

beatin' up to be done, you've got guys what can do it lots better than me."

"Bah! Some of my best men are only boys. They will help you, if you need help."

Laboeuf looked up sharply. They were aware of a distant knocking. It was at the front door. His woman appeared in the room and looked at him questioningly. He spoke rapidly in French, and she went out into the hall, closing the door behind her. Midge and Laboeuf listened. They heard the front door open, heard a muffled interchange of voices, and then the door closed again. The woman returned.

She said something to Laboeuf, and the big man's face underwent a startling transformation. He wheeled about, grasped Midge by the shoulder, almost lifting him out of his chair.

"It is the man!" he exclaimed. "The man we talk about. In the big hat. He was at the door."

"Yeah?"

"You want money, eh? You do this job right and I get your money back for you."

Swiftly he gave Midge his instructions. At first the little man demurred, but Laboeuf raged at him, cursed him, shoved him to the door and thrust him out into the street.

Midge, frightened but obedient, hastened in pursuit of Michael Brent.

## CHAPTER XV

### NUMBER NINETY!



ONTREAL, being very old, is a gray city seamed with the story of its years. Its streets have the fantastic irregularity of the wrinkles in an old man's face. They seem to follow no set plan, they twist and curve and merge with one another and divide into smaller wrinkles, which are a network of lanes and alleys, to the confusion of the stranger and often to the bewilderment of the native. And

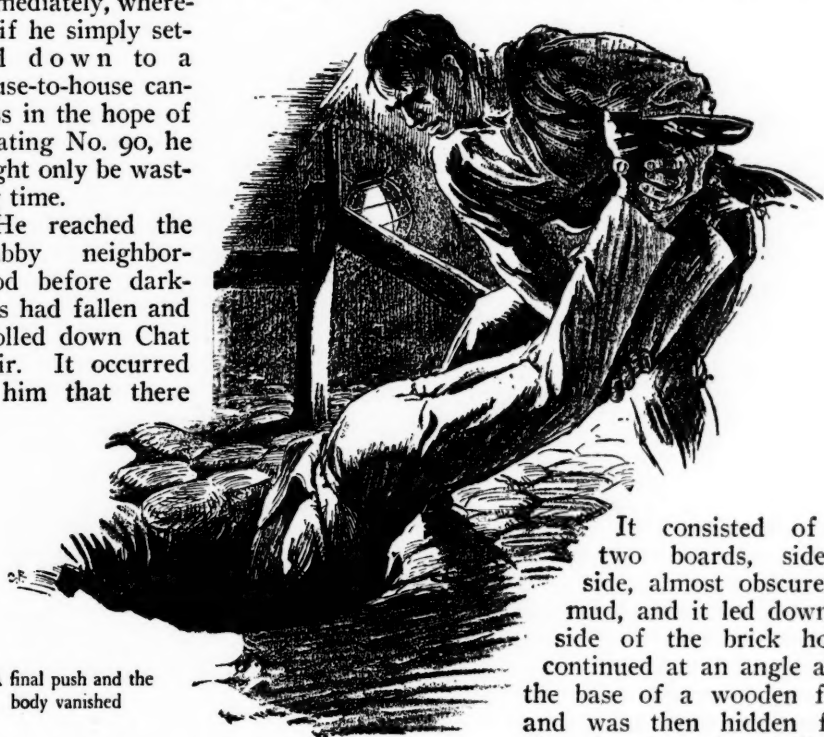
the old streets, the narrow streets, the tortuous streets, are streets of shadow.

Michael Brent had resolved to follow Minton's suggestion and concentrate on Chat Noir as a whole. It was quite possible that a few judicious inquiries might put him on the right trail immediately, whereas if he simply settled down to a house-to-house canvass in the hope of locating No. 90, he might only be wasting time.

He reached the shabby neighborhood before darkness had fallen and strolled down Chat Noir. It occurred to him that there

farther on he came to a dirty, rutted road.

It was flanked on either side by a hideous brick house, and at first he took it to be merely an alley leading to the back yards. Then, at one side, the attorney caught sight of a plank walk.



A final push and the body vanished

were dark and devious thoroughfares branching off the street that might be investigated with profit while the light was good.

Most of these, he found, were nothing more than lanes, dirty, garbage-strewn alleys, and although broken-down houses had managed to squeeze themselves in here and there he found neither street signs nor numbers.

One such evil lane caught his eye when he had been prowling about the neighborhood for more than half an hour. Mr. Brent had reached the vicinity of the signboard on the vacant lot where he had expected to find No. 90 the previous day, and a few paces

It consisted of but two boards, side by side, almost obscured by mud, and it led down the side of the brick house, continued at an angle along the base of a wooden fence and was then hidden from view by the other building.

From the angle, Brent judged there was a street or alley of some kind beyond, which merely crooked sharply from this outlet to Chat Noir. It was almost dusk now, but he decided to investigate this one remaining thoroughfare, if such it were.

Mud squelched under the planks as he walked down into the shadow of the brick house, and when he came to the fence he found that his surmise had been correct. Before him lay a short, narrow street, in length about half an ordinary block, opening at the far end on a more or less regular thoroughfare where lights were twinkling.

This passage was as sinister as it

was dirty. The narrow, plank walk continued down one side past half a dozen grimy old dwellings. On the other side of the street were a ditch, a fence, and a jungle of rubbish heaps.

The first house was deserted. Its windows were shattered and the front door sagged drunkenly open. The number plate by the open door had been torn loose and hung down backward by a single nail. It was a forlorn, dismal house, haunted by evil ghosts.

The next building apparently was occupied, for the front door was closed and Brent caught a glimmer of yellow light beneath a drawn shade. There was a number plate, cracked and blistered, but the figures were almost illegible, and the gloom had deepened so that Brent was obliged to draw close to the steps before he could decipher it.

Faintly he discerned the number.

Ninety-four.

"Getting warmer," the lawyer said to himself. He felt a glow of excitement as he hastened on to the next house.

It was a squat little frame shack, old and weather-beaten. A lamp shone through the front window, and he could hear a baby squalling. The number plate beside the door was rusted, but he thought he could distinguish the figure two.

The next was a brick house, a little better than the others in the row, with a flight of wooden steps leading to a door above the street level. There were two upper windows; in one a pane of glass was broken and the aperture was stuffed up with rags.

There was no sign of light or life. The house had an aloof and secretive air, as though its dingy brick walls guarded mysteries.

He could barely see the number plate, defaced by the sun, the wind and the rain, warped, cracked and rusted, but by venturing close he was able to discern the number he sought. There it was, faintly visible—No. 90!

Brent paused only long enough to make sure he had read the number aright. Then, trying to assume a casual air, he slowly moved on down the board walk.

He felt, intuitively, that this was the house with which the destiny of Paul Gregory had been so strangely concerned. This dark, silent dwelling on a squalid side street knew something of the hidden events that had culminated in the young architect's murder. Some one in this abode had known Gregory, had talked to him, doubtless knew the motives behind his death!

And there the building stood, aloof, reticent, inscrutable, guarding its secrets.

Brent had an impulse to turn, to retrace his steps, to walk up to the door, to knock, to demand the names of those who lived within, to ask what they knew of Paul Gregory and of his visits to Chat Noir.

This impulse was, of course, insane. He would learn nothing; at the best, he would meet suave denials: at the worst, he would be knocked on the head as a meddlesome spy.

He went on to the end of the sinister little street and came out upon a more respectable thoroughfare. He was puzzled as to his next course of action. He had found No. 90—he was sure of that—but what now?

Brent went into a tiny drug store, made a purchase, and engaged the clerk in conversation. What was the name of the little street to the left? The clerk did not know. Who lived there? The clerk shrugged and looked suspicious. Was it a tough street?

The clerk had heard that crooks lived there, mostly, and he wouldn't go up that street alone after dark for several million dollars. What kind of crooks? Just crooks, and what did Brent want to know for anyway?

"I was looking for a friend's house. He lives down this way, and I forgot the name of the street."

"If he lives up that street, brother,



you've got some funny friends, I'd say."

"Oh, he's quite respectable—"

"Then he don't live up there. And lissen, if I was you I just wouldn't go around asking questions. People might think you're a dick or something, and you might get into trouble."

Brent affected virtuous surprise.

"A dick? You mean a detective?"

"I'm just tipping you off, although it's none of my business. As long as you don't ask questions down around here nobody will bother you, but when you get curious—watch your step."

"Dear me! I didn't know. I hadn't the slightest idea—I *thought* I was in a rather queer part of town, but if you hadn't told me, I might have blundered into all sorts of trouble. Henry doesn't live in this sort of a neighborhood, at any rate, so I must be away off the track. I *do* wish I could remember the name of that street. Well, thank you very much, young man, for your warning. Goodness knows what might have happened me if I'd gone nosing around these streets—and it's getting dark now."

Michael Brent mopped his brow nervously, and backed out of the shop with all the agitation of a peaceful citizen who meant to lose no time in taking himself off from this criminal neighborhood into which he had unwittingly wandered.

As he went away, he knew he had effectually disarmed any suspicions the clerk may have entertained, but he saw that he would have to be careful. He had been given some excellent advice. It would not do to ask questions in the neighborhood of Chat Noir.

And yet, if he did not ask questions, how could he learn anything about No. 90?

Then he recalled an individual by the name of Kremberg, a close personal friend of Hinky Lewis, to whom he might talk with safety. On a number of past occasions, Kremberg had gone bail for Hinky, and there was un-

doubtedly some sort of alliance between the pair.

Michael Brent searched in his address book and discovered that the man was at the present time engaged in the night club racket, holding forth at the Pleasure Garden on Sanguinet Street.

This was not far away, so Brent got his bearings and returned to the Main, thence up to St. Catherine. He continued on to the black little gulf on either side of the great traffic artery and turned to his left into Sanguinet, one of the most forbidding of all the vicious thoroughfares in down town Montreal.

It was a very quiet street, with red brick houses jammed close together facing one another darkly. There were few street lights; no windows glowed; here and there a taxi waited at a doorway; occasionally a car bumped its way down the street, drew up at the curb, two or three men got out and went up the steps of one of the houses, a door opened discreetly and they disappeared.

But in spite of the quietness and darkness in such contrast to the booming glare of St. Catherine Street, just a few steps away, there was a brooding sense of hidden life.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE WOMAN AT NUMBER NINETY



HE Pleasure Garden had no outward evidences to distinguish it from any of the other buildings in this grim and gloomy row save a crimson lantern that hung above the door.

Brent, however, had been there previously on the occasion of one of Hinky's major peccadillos, so he strode up the steps jauntily and pressed the bell. The door was glass fronted, but no light shone from beyond. He was aware a few seconds later that he was being subjected to scrutiny from

within, as he stood in the ruby radiance of the lantern. Then the door opened silently.

He entered a dark hall, the front door closed, another opened, and a man in shabby evening dress escorted him into a small lobby.

"Kremberg around?"

The doorman scrutinized Brent carefully.

"I remember your face, sir," he said in a respectful voice, "but I can't place you."

"Brent."

"Oh, yes. I remember now. Mr. Kremberg may be upstairs. I just came on duty myself."

"It's a bit early, I know."

"Just go in and sit down, Mr. Brent. I'll see if I can find him for you."

To the right was a flight of stairs; to the left a door led into the Pleasure Garden itself. At the end of the hall the hat check girl presided, but the rows of empty hooks indicated that Brent was the first guest that evening.

Brent retained his hat and went into a long, low-ceilinged room, extending the entire length of the house and widening out at the rear to cover most of the ground floor space with the exception of the entrance hall.

It was festooned with colored paper and there was a cheap attempt at a gaudy decorative scheme. Tables were ranged along the sides, about the shimmering dance floor, and at the back was a kitchen, divided from the main room by a counter door. On a low platform three young fellows were tootling and twanging and tinkling on saxophone, banjo, and piano.

Two waiters were lounging about the kitchen entrance. One hastened over and Brent ordered an illicit high-ball that he didn't want, paid seventy-five cents for it, and tipped the waiter a quarter. Then he sipped his drink and pondered on the vast hocus-pocus of the whole business.

In a few hours, toward midnight and after, the Pleasure Garden would

be going full blast for the benefit of a flock of misguided citizens and tourists—thrill-seekers who were willing to pay dearly for the privilege of drinking illegally, preyed upon by all the dubious men and women who consorted in this place.

"Kremberg must be cleaning up," reflected Brent. "It's an easy graft."

The doorman appeared.

"Do you mind waiting, Mr. Brent? He is out just now, but we expect him any minute."

"I'll stick around. I want to talk to him about Hinky."

The doorman's plump face was impassive, but his eyelids flickered ever so slightly.

"As soon as Mr. Kremberg comes in, I'll have him told that you're here. It isn't very gay just now. We don't usually liven up until after the shows."

"That's all right. I didn't come in to be entertained."

"I hope you didn't pay for that high ball, Mr. Brent," said the man reprovingly.

"Why not?"

"I can't let you do that, Mr. Brent," the doorman explained. "Mr. Kremberg wouldn't like it. You must let me give you a better one." He snapped his fingers. The waiter came over. "Take this away and bring Mr. Brent a *good* high ball. When this gentleman comes here, he is to have the *best*," he added significantly.

And, as the waiter slithered off with the condemned drink on a tray, the doorman put three twenty-five-cent pieces on the table. "You must consider yourself Mr. Kremberg's guest," he went on in his soft voice. "The waiter made a mistake. Your high ball was—uh—a bit weak."

Brent grinned and pocketed the money.

"I feel flattered. When a night club takes back cut booze and gives me the real McCoy instead, I may consider that I've graduated from the sucker class."

As one initiate to another, the doorman smirked.

"We all have our tricks of the trade, Mr. Brent."

A telephone bell trilled just then, and he went out into the lobby. Brent sipped the new high ball and found it an immense improvement over the other one.

Minutes passed. The doorman did not return. The musicians idly rehearsed a number. The waiters were out in the kitchen, exchanging stories with the chef, otherwise known as the barkeep.

Brent whiled away the time by trying to compose an epigram stating his conclusion that the only place more depressing than a cheap night club before any one has arrived, is a cheap night club after every one has gone home, but he found this great thought difficult of concentration.

Then he pondered for a while on the relative points of similarity between a telegram and an epigram, but decided they had nothing in common beyond brevity. This led to a consideration of epigrams in general, and he wondered why people who achieved epigrams are considered exceedingly clever, when the feat is simply a matter of making a statement in one of half a dozen hackneyed formulas.

Thus musing, he finished the high ball. The doorman had not returned and Kremberg had not appeared, so he ordered another, and was charmed to find that the waiter apparently expected neither tip nor payment.

This high ball was quite as potent as its predecessor and induced a number of moral reflections on the high cost of inebriety in night clubs. Was it not dishonest to charge seventy-five cents for a drink of weak liquor; on the other hand, did it not promote temperance by rendering the sucker penniless before he got drunk? And, after all—oh, well, who cared?

Abandoning this train of thought, Michael Brent reverted to a considera-

tion of the mystery of No. 90. He now saw clearly that boldness was the proper course; he should have gone right up to the door.

Under the stimulating influence of the excellent high balls, and far removed from the sinister shadows of the street, his heart was brave within him. He had erred on the side of caution. There was little to fear. Every one knew that criminals were invariably cowards.

Quite reckless and valiant, Mr. Brent got up and wandered out into the lobby, firmly clutching his hat.

The doorman heard him and hastened downstairs.

"How about Kremberg?" Brent asked impatiently.

"He will be late this evening, Mr. Brent. I am sorry. But if you care to wait half an hour longer—he telephoned to me just a few minutes ago."

"I won't wait. I may be back later on."

"Very well."

Urbane as ever, the doorman let him out into the street, and the lawyer swaggered along Sanguinet, up St. Catherine and down the Main with a purposeful stride. He was not at all drunk; he was simply at that stage where one's powers are magnificent and obstacles are but pebbles to be kicked aside.

His confidence diminished in some slight degree when he plunged into the darkness of Chat Noir, and by the time he had returned to the entrance of the lane he was beginning to wonder if, after all, it might not have been better to have waited for Kremberg. It was certainly a very black little alley in a very disreputable neighborhood.

Then the two high balls asserted themselves again and Michael Brent observed audibly that he would be damned if any street in Montreal could scare him.

So he stumbled along the precarious board walk, stepping off into the mud more than once, until he came to the

end of the fence and saw the little street before him, with the twinkling lights of the cross thoroughfare in the distance. The lights reassured him. He had no distinct plan of campaign, but he meant to at least catch a glimpse of the occupants of No. 90, and, with any luck, perhaps learn something about them.

When Brent reached the house he saw a thin sliver of gold at the bottom of one of the window blinds, indicating there was a light within. He hesitated a moment, then went up the steps to knock.

Scarcely had he left the board walk than there was a deep-throated bellow from the back of the house. Then another, and another. Three dogs set up a hideous clamor. Their hoarse barking was coldly ferocious.

The sound was so utterly unexpected that the visitor stepped back, uncertain whether to proceed. Then he heard a man's voice, and the clamor subsided as suddenly as it began. Chains clanked, he heard the man's voice again; then a door slammed; there was silence.

Brent shrugged. No. 90 was evidently well guarded against intrusion.

He went boldly up on to the veranda and knocked at the door. There was no response. After a while he knocked again.

Footsteps beyond the door. A light shone dimly through the little glass. The dirty curtain was drawn back and he faintly saw a human face. The door opened slightly.

"*Oui?*" A woman's voice, tremulous.

"Does Mr. Robinson live here?" asked Brent.

"*Non!*"

"Isn't this No. 90?"

He was trying to discern the face of the woman. She stood back in the shadows, however, and he could see her but vaguely.

"Who are you looking for?" she asked in a sullen voice.

"Mr. Robinson."

"Do you know which house he lives in?"

"He doesn't live here."

The door opened a trifle wider. In the light of the hall he could see the woman more clearly now. She was a slatternly creature with wild dark hair and suspicious eyes. Her lips drooped.

"He doesn't live here."

"You don't know where he lives?" persisted Brent.

"Not here."

The door closed. He heard the click of a lock. There was silence beyond. He sensed that the woman was eying him through the curtain.

Brent turned away. He walked down the steps to the board walk.

He had at least seen the woman's face, and he had an odd impression that he had seen the slattern before.

This, on the face of it, was absurd. He had never been in this part of the city until the previous day. But the face was familiar.

He probed in the recesses of his memory. Clients, women of the street, prisoners and witnesses—none of them. But he had seen that sullen, tragic face recently, somewhere.

The connection eluded him. He walked on slowly, head down, puzzled. The woman was in No. 90. He must, therefore, have seen her in connection with his investigations since Gregory's death. But what women had he seen? The Hilliard girl, her chum, the beautiful girl of Chat Noir—none of them.

Abruptly the solution clicked into his mind.

The photograph Minton had clipped from the newspaper! *The picture found in Gregory's room!*

It was the same woman. There was no mistaking the features. She had aged by several years, but the eyes were the same, there were still traces of the plump, girlish beauty. There was no doubt of it. This was the woman mentioned by Pelham Starr, this was the woman Gregory had visited in



Chat Noir, this was the woman of No. 90!

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MANHOLE



### CHERCHEZ LA FEMME!

And he had found her. As Michael Brent went on toward the corner he experienced a great exultation.

He had stumbled on a rich vein of ore in his discovery of No. 90.

The woman was good-looking—beautiful, in fact—yet he could not help but wonder how Paul Gregory had become involved with her. After all, she could be nothing more than a drab.

Brent, however, had seen enough of the world to be aware of the perverse inclinations of the human heart. He believed that deep down in every man was the impulse toward the sty; in most of us it is buried, suppressed—an abomination—and in some it manifests itself only to be scotched by forces of self-respect; in a few, it rises to be obeyed. He had known of rich and influential men who had become entangled with the lowest of water front women.

His next move? He did not know. Clearly he must see this person again, question her. But would he learn anything? He had no authority, and he knew that the denizens of the streets of shadow resent prying—viciously and forcibly.

Should he go to the police with what he knew? Undoubtedly, he considered, this would be the wise course. They were seeking this woman. He had found her. Under expert questioning she would undoubtedly explain her relationship with Gregory.

It would be sheer vanity to continue alone, and vanity might earn him a broken head. He concluded that he had gone as far as he could, single-handed. It was now time to turn his information over to the police.

Thus deliberating, Michael Brent reached the corner and looked to left and to right, trying to define his position. There was a trolley line somewhere off to his right; he could hear the roar of the cars, so he struck off in that direction.

The lawyer did not know this quarter at all, and he was somewhat confused. He looked in vain for a taxi, but at that hour on the quiet street there was no traffic of any kind.

There were few lights, and although the street was wider than the alley he had just quitted, it was every bit as villainous and sinister in appearance. The houses all had that dark, tight-lipped aspect common to buildings in these neighborhoods—catacombs of secrets.

He passed a lane that led up behind the houses on the street of No. 90. It was blackly mysterious and forbidding.

The next corner was not far away. He had almost reached it when he heard footsteps pattering along the street behind him. He did not look back, but when a man fell into step with him he looked and saw a shabby little fellow who seemed somehow familiar to him.

"Mister," said a soft voice.

Brent did not answer. One is accosted at all hours of the day and night on Montreal streets by persons temporarily down on their luck and plaintively anxious for the "loan" of a dime wherewith to buy a "cupacawfee." Brent had found that deafness was the best defense against these pests.

"Mister," came the soft voice again.

Michael Brent walked on, looking straight ahead.

"I'm not makin' a touch, mister," persisted the shabby man. "If it's information you're after, you'll find it worth while to talk to me."

Brent looked down at his companion. The fellow was certainly not prepossessing. He was a slinky little rat, his lips were drawn down at the corners as

though they had never been permitted to curve in a smile—and then, as the corner light fell on the sharp face, came recognition.

This was the little man he had met with the girl of Chat Noir!

For a moment, Brent could scarcely credit the circumstance. He stopped short and peered at the fellow. There was no mistake. The same pinched, peaked face, the same ruddy nose, the same weak chin. The coincidence surprised him, but the fact that the little man had sought him out, promising information, thoroughly astonished the attorney.

"Information about what?" he asked.

"No. 90."

It was like a blow in the face. How did this stranger know of his concern with No. 90? *This* man, above all! Even without mention of No. 90, Brent would have been interested in this bum by the very circumstance that he had first seen the fellow with the beautiful girl who had so intrigued him the previous day. But here he was, obsequiously hinting at revelations in the mystery of No. 90!

Brent had sufficient presence of mind to conceal his surprise.

"What," he asked, "is No. 90?"

"Mister," said the little man, "you don't need to sidestep with me, see? We can understand each other if you'll let me. Of course, I know I'm not in your class, mister, and don't think I got too much nerve talkin' to you like this, but if you want to know somethin', mebbe I can help you. I know my place, mister. I know my place, but I like to help a gentleman when I can."

Cautiously, Brent said: "It's very good of you. What makes you think I want to know anything about No. 90?"

"I *know*, mister, I *know*! You can't do much down in these parts without it gettin' known around. You're a stranger, see, and you ask

questions. Mebbe I can answer some of them for you."

"Why would you?"

"I got my own reasons, mister. You're a dick, I figure. Am I right or wrong?"

Brent made no reply. The little man went on.

"I got my own reasons, and if there was certain people in No. 90 got what was comin' to 'em, I wouldn't do no cryin'. None at all."

"I see. And what could you tell me?"

"I could tell you plenty, mister. It all depends what you want to know. And would it do me any good to spill it?"

"You mean you want money?"

The little man put out his right hand, palm downward, in a curt gesture.

"Not a penny, mister. Not a penny. It ain't money I'm after. I wouldn't take a penny for what I can tell you. But I gotta be sure you'll use it."

He halted on the street corner. Brent halted, too. He studied the thin, oldish face, the shifty eyes. The down-and-outer was typical of the quarter, perhaps a cheap crook with a grudge against some one in No. 90. He had evidently mistaken the lawyer for a detective and considered it an opportunity for a fine bit of revenge.

"What could you tell me?"

"Will you use it?"

"In what way?"

"Mister, there ain't no sense in sidestepin' like that. Do you want to know anythin' about No. 90?"

"Yes."

The little man cocked his head on one side and peered up, wisely.

"Good!" he said, with an unmistakable air of satisfaction. "Mister, that's *all* I have to know. Absolutely *all*! I don't want to know nothin' about why you're askin' questions about No. 90, or what you're workin' on. All I want to know is that you'll use the dope."

"What makes you think I'm interested?"

"I told you before, mister, I *know*."

Brent hesitated.

"Who is the woman living there?" he asked.

The little man looked around. Across the street, some one was trudging along the pavement, coming in their direction.

"Mister," said the shabby man, placing a thin hand on Brent's sleeve, "would you mind steppin' off this street while we talk. I'm known around here, see, and if the blow-off came and somebody remembered I was talkin' to you, where would I be?"

He leaned closer.

"Where would I be, eh, mister? I'd be floatin' down the little old St. Lawrence with a slug in me, wouldn't I? That's the way they do things down here, see? If you don't mind walkin' up this here side street instead of stickin' to the main drag, I could talk better."

The side street was dark and narrow, but it was not very long, presumably ending in Chat Noir. There was a red lantern glimmering in the middle of the road, and Brent could see the dim outline of a wooden inclosure fencing off the scene of some repair work.

The little man was already edging off into the gloom.

"This bird comin' down the other side," he whispered, "he knows me, see. I can't take no chances, mister. Let's beat it."

Brent followed, slowly. He was cautious, but there was an earnestness about the shabby little man that convinced him the fellow really had something to tell. And it was quite reasonable that he would not care to be seen in conversation with one whom the people of the quarter had already marked as a detective.

"You wanted to know—" inquired the little man, slackening his pace.

"About the woman."

"In No. 90?"

"Yes."

They were drawing near the red lantern in the middle of the road. Somehow its crimson glow gave Brent an odd sense of discomfort. Red meant danger.

"Mister," said the little man, pressing closely against him, "just *why* do you want to know about her?"

His face was just a pallid blur in the gloom. Brent suddenly sensed a sharp menace.

"Why all this shilly-shallying?" he snapped impatiently. "I didn't ask you to tell me anything."

"Mister, don't get sore. Don't get sore. I gotta be careful, see. I can give you plenty of dope on that place, but I gotta watch my step, mister."

Brent frowned. Abruptly he wheeled about.

"Look here," he said. "I don't like your manner. You offered to tell me something and now you're stalling. What's the big idea? I'm not going to waste any more time on you."

"Mister—" pleaded the little man, and grasped at Brent's arm. But the lawyer wrenched his arm free and strode back toward the entrance of the dark street.

He had gone but two paces when he heard a scuffling footstep, a sharp intake of breath. He swung around. The little man was right behind him, arm upraised.

Brent lunged to one side as the arm descended. Something struck him heavily on the shoulder.

He grappled, punching at the other's body. They strained to and fro, bodies close together.

Brent tried to seize the little man's right arm, but the fellow was too quick for him. He knew the blow was coming, but he couldn't dodge.

His skull seemed to crack into fragments, with an explosion of white light, oblivion swooped over him.

Brent slumped on the roadway. He sprawled there, one arm bent under

him, and he did not move at all.

Midge, breathing heavily, looked down at the inert figure. He put the short length of lead pipe back into his pocket and wiped his hands reflectively on the front of his coat.

"That 'll teach him a lesson," he muttered.

It occurred to the assailant that his proximity to this unconscious figure in the middle of the road was dangerous, so he scuttled off into the shadows at the side of the street; he disappeared down a narrow passage between two houses.

Brent lay where he had fallen.

The street was deserted.

The red lantern glowed beyond the wooden fence. Far away a bell was tolling; the notes sounded clearly and distinctly above the confused hum of the city. A taxi sped past the street entrance, with a harsh screech.

Brent had not moved. The tolling of the bell died away. The city hummed on.

After a while some one emerged from the passage that had swallowed up Midge. He was a huge man, but he moved as silently as a cat. He stood over the prostrate form.

He hesitated, looked over at the red lantern, then bent down and seized Brent's shoulders. He dragged the lawyer toward the wooden fence.

Inside the flimsy guard rail there was a round black hole in the surface of the road. The big man let Brent slump to the pavement, and quietly let down one end of the rail.

Then, with a quick movement, he grasped the body again, and thrust it to the edge of the manhole. It slipped forward, the head and shoulders disappeared. A final push and the body vanished. There was a distant, significant splash.

The big man stood beside the black hole, looking down. He turned aside, methodically replaced the guard rail, and walked away. He went into the dark passage.

The street was deserted again.

The ruby light glowed over the hole.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EVIDENCE OF FOUL PLAY



INTON usually reached the office at nine o'clock in the morning. He was occasionally five or ten minutes ahead of time; he was never by any chance five or ten minutes late. A less conscientious man might have taken advantage of his employer's notorious tardiness, but Minton, as has been said, ordered his life by an invisible time clock.

He let himself into the office on the morning after Michael Brent's visit to No. 90, precisely as a distant clock boomed the hour, took off his hat and coat, hung them up, donned his worn jacket and sat down at his desk. He gave no thought, of course, to Brent's absence. Never, since he came to work for Brent, had the lawyer reached the office first.

Noon came. No Brent.

Not until the afternoon did a few vague misgivings disturb him. He reached for the telephone and called Brent's apartment. There was no answer.

Minton got up and went out, carefully locking the door. He went across the street to the Fleur de Lis and asked Alphonse if Brent had been in that day.

The waiter shook his head. "Not dis afternoon, not dis morning. First time he miss coming in here, so far back I can remember."

Michael Brent's afternoon visit to the tavern was almost in the nature of a religious rite. Minton coughed doubtfully and went on to the bookshop.

He had to do considerable exploring before he finally discovered Mr. Dryborough sitting on the floor at the back of the shop, behind a rampart of books, immersed in a dusty volume.



"Has Mr. Brent been in to-day?" asked the faithful servant.

Dryborough looked up, blinked, and put the book aside.

"I haven't seen him for two days," he announced, looking at Minton severely.

"He hasn't been at the office to-day."

"Is he sick?"

"He's not at his apartment."

"In court?"

"He would have called at the office first."

"Out of town?"

"He would have let me know."

"Got run over and sent to the hospital?"

"I'd have been notified."

This appeared to exhaust Mr. Dryborough's stock of possible explanations, but he thought deeply for a few moments and ventured:

"On a drunk?"

"Mr. Brent never goes on drunks," Minton responded stiffly.

"That's true, too," Dryborough said. "Still, you never can tell."

Minton refused to consider this explanation and departed. He made his way up to Dorchester Street on a visit to the little apartment house where Brent stayed. He went up a heavily carpeted flight of stairs and tapped at the door of Brent's apartment, but there was no answer, so he went down into the lobby.

The *conciierge*, a grandmotherly old lady in a little white cap, emerged from some mysterious region, and after Minton had stated his business she went over to a marble-topped table and shuffled a few letters lying there.

"See? This mail came for him this morning."

"He may have gone out before the mail arrived."

The old lady pressed a bell. In a little while a maid appeared on the landing. They exchanged a few rapid words in French. The old lady turned to Minton again.

"M'sieu' Brent he did not come in at all last night."

"Oh!"

"The maid she says his bed was not slept in."

Minton thanked her and went away. He had an uneasy feeling that something had gone wrong. However, he had a whole-hearted fear of making a fool of himself, so he did not pursue his inquiries further, although he scanned the afternoon paper with particular attention to the accident list.

He finished the afternoon in a state of anxiety, and went home to exchange theories with the family at the supper table. By a majority vote it was decided that he should not worry.

Next day Minton waited nervously until almost noon, but Brent did not appear. Then he went over to the Fleur de Lis and found Dryborough disconsolately drinking a mug of beer. He confided his perturbation to the old bookseller, but that skeptical man affirmed that Brent must certainly be on a drunk, a very big drunk, because even the best of 'em went on a toot once in a while.

But Minton knew better. He made inquiries at the apartment house, the hospitals, the courthouse, and even the morgue, but there was no trace of Michael Brent, so he went reluctantly to police headquarters.

"Missing, eh?" said the official to whom he told his story. "Perhaps he went out of town."

Minton shook his head.

"I happen to know he was making some investigations that might have taken him into a bad neighborhood. It's just possible that some harm may have come to him."

"H-m! That's different. What neighborhood?"

"He mentioned a street called Chat Noir," Minton said cautiously.

"Chat Noir! And you haven't seen him since? I'd say it was high time you came around to tell us about it."

"Say!" spoke up a plain-clothes man

lounching near by. "How about that hat I found? It was in an alley near Chat Noir."

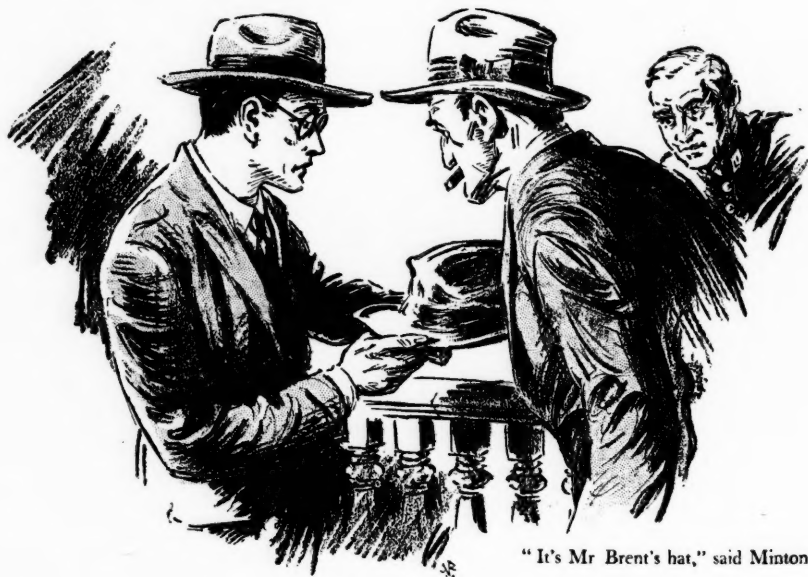
The sergeant nodded. "Bring it up." He turned to Minton. "One of the boys found a hat down around that neighborhood. There was blood on it. We'll let you have a look at it."

"Yes, it's his hat. I'd know it by the dents in it, if nothing else. Same size, same material, same shape."

He glanced inside, and gulped.

Sticking to the sweatband were several black hairs, in a russet stain.

"Something terrible has happened to Mr. Brent!"



"It's Mr. Brent's hat," said Minton

Minton turned perceptibly paler.

"What kind of hat?"

"I dunno. I didn't see it. The hat was brought in, just in case it might be useful. There's a lot of funny things happen around there."

Minton waited, trembling. After a while the plain-clothes man returned and tossed a black hat carelessly on the desk.

"It's his," Minton said dully.

"Huh?" The plain-clothes man lost his casual air at once.

"It's Mr. Brent's hat. I'd know it anywhere."

The floppy black hat that was Michael Brent's most picturesque affectation looked battered and forlorn. Minton recognized it immediately. He had seen that hat too often to be mistaken. He picked it up.

"Black haired, was he?"

"Yes."

The plain-clothes man examined the hat, inside and out, with professional interest.

"I'd say that whoever was wearin' this hat got a nasty knock on the dome. I guess we'll have to get busy on this."

"Where was it found?"

"I was on a case down around Chat Noir yesterday and the cop on the beat told me about findin' this hat. It was lyin' beside the curb, he said, and when he saw the blood on it he picked it up and turned it over to me. But we didn't have no report of any trouble around there, so I never thought any more about it."

"I've wasted so much valuable time," Minton said plaintively. "I should have known there was some-

thing wrong."

"It would 'a' been better if you'd come in right away, but I guess you thought he'd turn up, huh? Well, you come with me and we'll get the particulars and mebbe we'll find out what happened him."

Then ensued various formalities, after which Minton left headquarters. He was frightened and rather dazed. Every time he thought of that dreadful blood stain on the sweatband he shuddered.

He had given the police a complete description of Brent as he had last seen him, but he had omitted mentioning the reason for the lawyer's descent into Chat Noir. In that respect he remained cautious. More than once he was tempted to make some mention of No. 90, but he suppressed the impulse. Brent might still be alive. Only as a last resort would Minton divulge the clues on which his employer had been working.

He went back to the office, but he couldn't work. He was no stranger to crime and violence, in the academic sense; such things had been part of his daily routine for years, but this was the first time anything of the sort had obtruded on his personal life. He was profoundly shaken.

Just as he was about to leave the office, the telephone rang.

Tremulously he answered. A gruff voice bade him come down to police headquarters immediately.

"Is—is there any trace of him?"

"We got something. It may be a clew. You come on down and take a look at what we've found."

Click!

Minton was sweating as he struggled into his coat and seized his hat. There was something grimly indefinite about that "take a look at what we've found." What had they found? A body? In a state of shivering suspense he hastened to headquarters.

Their discovery was not what he feared. It was only a coat—a soggy,

bedraggled garment that lay limply across a table, with a paper tag attached to one of the buttons. A bored officer gestured toward it.

"This was brought in a little while ago. It was found in an ash can a couple of blocks from where Mr. Brent's hat was picked up. See if you can identify it, will you?"

Minton picked up the coat gingerly. It was damp to the touch. It had evidently been very wet, and it had lost its shape, but he saw that it was Brent's coat, without a doubt. He looked for the tailor's tag on the inner pocket. That settled it.

"Mr. Brent was wearing that coat when I last saw him," Minton told the officer.

The man took the garment from him indifferently.

"It's his, eh? You're sure?"

"Quite sure."

The officer examined the collar.

"Did you see them?" He indicated a few rusty stains.

"I—I didn't notice. Is it—"

"Blood. That's what made us think mebbe it was his coat. He got knocked on the head, sure enough, and the blood stained his hat and went over the back of his coat collar, see?"

Minton was almost speechless with dread.

"Do you think he's been murdered?"

The officer shrugged and tossed the coat back on the table.

"Where was it found?"

"In an ash can."

"Near where they found the hat?"

"No. That's what makes it kinda hard to figger out. One of our men fished the coat out of an ash can in an alley about five or six blocks away."

"Wasn't there anything in the pockets? No papers?"

"Not a thing."

"The coat," said Minton, vacantly, "seems damp."

"It rained like hell the night he disappeared."

"Yes, that's right. It *did* rain."

"Well, you identify the coat, huh?"

"Yes, there's no doubt of it. He was wearing that very coat the last time I saw him. The very coat."

Minton looked sadly at the limp garment on the table. The rusty stains on the collar seemed to grow larger and redder as he gazed at them in fascination.

"And that's that. I guess your boss was bumped off, all right. Don't worry. We'll find his body somewhere. It'll turn up."

With this consolation, Minton had to be content. He was subjected to further questioning before he left headquarters, but stubbornly resisted the temptation to tell the detectives why Brent had invaded Chat Noir. There was still a chance, he told himself, still a chance that his employer was alive.

But on his way home that evening he bought a newspaper and read a bristling headline that seemed to confirm all his apprehensions:

**LAWYER MISSING; FOUL PLAY FEARED!**

There was something grim and authoritative about the heavy black type. It summed up everything, coldly, tersely, and left scant room for hope. Minton was surprised to find, on reading the news story beneath the headline, that the paper had already learned of his identification of the coat; it did not occur to him that the police had merely awaited this identification before releasing the story.

The bald facts related in the account almost frightened him. Until this time he had been blindly confident, refusing to admit to himself that Brent might be dead; it seemed that the newspaper refused to consider any other theory.

Michael Brent, a well-known criminal lawyer, had ventured into an unsavory quarter of the city at night on business. He had not returned. His hat, battered and bloodstained, had

been found in an alley. His coat, also bloodstained, had been found in an ash can five blocks away. Police investigation had unearthed no further trace of him. What else could one make of that but murder?

Minton crumpled the newspaper in his thin hands and stared morosely at the vest buttons of a strap hanger standing before him in the crowded trolley. He might have been carried past his stop had not the habit of years brought him mechanically to his feet exactly when the car slowed down at his street corner.

At the supper table he found himself, for the first time in years, the center of importance, but he was too depressed to enjoy the novelty of the experience. The family actually listened to him with respect. When he told of identifying the coat, and of seeing the ominous stains of blood, two of the younger Mintons began to howl with fear, and were packed off to bed, weeping.

Next morning, before he set out for the office, he telephoned to police headquarters and asked if there had been any further trace of Michael Brent.

"Nothing yet," he was told.

Minton was not stampeded out of his daily routine. He went to the office as usual, arriving a few minutes before nine o'clock. He hung up his hat and coat, donned his jacket, sat down at his desk. In a few minutes the door opened and Dryborough came in. The old bookseller looked questioningly at him and Minton shook his head.

"No news at all?"

"None."

"I read about it in the paper last night," said Dryborough. "It's the damndest thing, isn't it?"

"It is very serious," agreed Minton.

"Blood stains," muttered Dryborough, sitting down. "Blood stains! You're sure it was his hat and coat?"

"Positive."

"With blood stains on 'em?"



"I saw them myself."

Dryborough shook his head sadly, mumbling to himself. Then he stared at Minton in a challenging manner.

"Do you really think he's dead?"

"I hope not. But if he's alive he would have got in touch with somebody by now, don't you think? Then, there are the blood stains."

"That's true."

"Perhaps," suggested Minton hopefully, "he's being held prisoner somewhere."

Dryborough sniffed.

"That happens in books. Who would hold him prisoner? What for?"

Minton had no reply.

"Poor Brent!" sighed Dryborough.

"I always liked him, you know. I'll miss my afternoon glass of beer with him."

Already, reflected Minton, the man was referring to Brent in the past tense.

"It's very mysterious, to say the least."

"He should have known better," Dryborough commented testily. "He should have known better than to go wandering around those back streets at night. Just like some silly tourist. He was inviting a knock on the head."

"It was on business."

"Funny kind of business! It'll be too bad if they don't find his body."

"Don't talk like that," protested Minton.

Dryborough glared at him. "They don't always find 'em."

"I can't believe Mr. Brent is dead," insisted Minton.

"Well, it doesn't do any harm to hope. But—blood stains!"

"He may have met with an accident and lost his memory."

Dryborough nodded. "Almost anybody is liable to meet with an accident if they go prowling around those streets after dark."

The telephone jangled. Minton picked up the receiver. "Yes? Yes. What is it? I'll be right down."

He thrust aside the instrument and began to struggle out of his jacket.

"Anything new?" Dryborough asked sharply.

"They've found a watch. They think it might be his."

"A watch, eh? Where?"

"In a pawnshop."

"I knew it!" declared Mr. Dryborough triumphantly. "Murdered for his money! Knocked on the head, just like a silly tourist! What an idiotic and disgraceful way to die!"

Minton shook his head sadly, but in his heart he refused to admit that his master, strong, clever and resourceful, had died at the age of thirty with a double murder mystery still unsolved.

THE THIRD INSTALLMENT OF THIS DRAMATIC NARRATIVE IN THE  
JUNE MUNSEY WILL THROW ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON THE  
SENSATIONAL GREGORY-HILLIARD CASE!

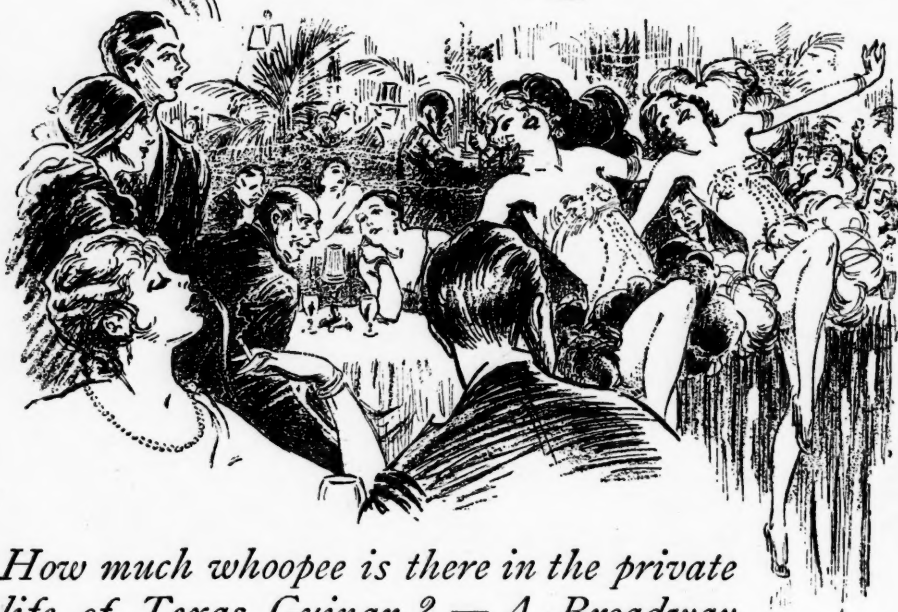


#### DISTANCE

DESERT and sea may loving hearts divide  
And yet, between, the distance be not wide,  
But, ah, that one residing near thy gate  
How far remote, across the gulf of hate!

*John Troland*

# The Queen of



*How much whoopee is there in the private life of Texas Guinan? — A Broadway observer gives this little girl the once over*

By Carl Helm

Portrait Drawing by Rafael

**I**T is three o'clock in the morning. The city is silent in slumber. Your taxicab rolls up before a canopied door on a quiet, dimly lit street, off Broadway in the Fifties, in the heart of New York.

You present your credentials, take a last breath of fresh air, and walk through the door into bedlam. Here is the Broadway that the hinterland hears about, that the stage and the screen portray in vivid colors. Glamorous gayety, riotous spending, pleasure mad men and women—Texas Gui-

nan's Night Club.

Here is enthroned the Queen of Broadway, with her courtiers, dancers and jesters. The seekers of high life, of fun and excitement, from all parts of the world are her subjects, at least for a night. Her kingdom is a long, smoky room, festooned with silk and rich hangings. It is crammed full of people sitting at tables, shouting to make themselves heard.

A jazz band blares in an unending rhythm. In a space hardly big enough for six people to stand, forty or fifty are dancing. Waiters push their way

# Clubs



"Come on, suckers! Give these little girls big hand!"

through the throng, bearing trays of hot food. Broadway is just waking up.

Now the crowd sets up a horrific clatter. They pound on their tables and shake wooden rattles. The band plays a long and loud chord. The queen is coming—Texas Guinan herself. And with her are the half naked dancing girls, the singers, and jesters who make up her court.

"Ya-a-a-ay, Texas!" bawls the crowd. The revelers greet her entrance, and pound their rattles the harder.

"Hello, suckers!" shouts the queen, beaming with smiles. King Jazz mounts the throne along with her, and the wild night is beginning.

Theater parties, out for a night; "big butter and egg men" with plenty of money to spend; society people seeking a thrill; Broadway celebrities who want to be seen; people who have come here to see them; racketeers with their expensive companions; strait-laced men and women from the corn belt and the prairies who have come to be shocked—all are gathered here to see Texas Guinan, whose name throughout the country means the night life itself.

The riot now starts in earnest. Texas mounts a chair which serves as a throne. In the glare of the spotlight that pierces the smoke she is Broadway incarnate. Her curly blond hair, her smiling red lips, her form in

a clinging silk dress: you know she is close on to forty, but her years are well hidden; she seems ageless at night.

The gayety lags for a moment. Texas whips it up. "Ya-a-a-ay!" she cries, introducing a dancer. "Give this little girl a big hand!" The crowd responds with a storm of applause. The band strikes up a fast tune, and the show goes on.

Thus it continues until the morning has come. Out in the gray light of dawn go women in diamonds and jewels and ermine, men in tail coats and top hats. Taxicabs and limousines gather them in, carry them to hotels or apartments—few of them would call the place "home." There the jazz mad may continue their revels—or fall exhausted to sleep.

But what of the Queen of Broadway? What does she do when her night's work is over—for her rôle of the queen is really only a job she is paid for—where does she go from the riotous night?

## II

PREPARE for a shock. It will be a big one—or will it? Isn't it just all the disillusionment of Broadway, rolled into one? I think so.

Anyhow, Texas sheds her regal robes, kisses her dancing girls good night; "my kids," she calls them. Then she goes for an hour's horseback ride in Central Park, changes her clothes again and then goes home to her father and mother and brother. The Queen of Broadway leads a far more conventional, orderly, less questionable life than nine out of ten of the people who come to her club for excitement.

You wouldn't believe it? Of course you wouldn't. I wouldn't myself until I had seen it time after time. Texas Guinan is an amazing woman.

She neither drinks nor smokes. She is conventionally married. She attends church regularly. She loves her old white-haired mother and her old white-haired father, and her "kid" brother,

Tommy. They all live together in an old-fashioned home; and that home is in about the quietest, most respectable part of Greenwich Village.

A strange place for the Queen of Broadway to live, surely enough. But she owns the property, a two-story, red-brick house some forty years old. And she and her family have lived there for the last fifteen years. "Down," as Texas says, "where the Village begins to kid itself!"

Texas Guinan is still Texas Guinan, the one-time cowgirl and hard rider, after she has left the night club for the bridle paths of Central Park. She rides there in the first glow of the morning sun. Invariably one of the mounted cops meets her at the lower end of the park, and rides through the gravel paths with her for an hour or so.

If there is no cop or other man around to ride with her, Texas rides alone with her thoughts. The smoke, the noise, the smell of the night club: the morning wind blows them away in the ride through the park. The sweet morning air, the thrill of the gallop, leave her nerves relaxed and refreshed. She gives her horse to a groom, and he calls a cab—"Down Fifth Avenue to Eighth Street, driver; then the middle of the block, on the left."

The cab stops in front of an unpretentious little door. Then up the red-carpeted stairs goes a tired, sleepy woman, Mary Louise Cecilia Guinan, beloved daughter of Papa and Mamma Guinan, who have been in bed and asleep since ten in the evening. The woman called "Texas"—the toast of Broadway, known to millions as the symbol of all that New York night life means to them—never enters that home door.

At the top of the first flight of stairs is a large oil painting of a beautiful blue-eyed girl. Her face is sweetly fresh and innocent; her eyes are soft as a bit of blue sky. She wears an old-fashioned dress, and her hat is



hung by a ribbon over her arm. A pair of baby blue candles in dull bronze candlesticks flank this charming portrait.

It is Mary Louise Cecilia, whom the world knows as "Texas." She smiles as her tired woman's eyes glance at her own youthful beauty. There is something about that picture of Mary Louise—I don't know what it is. I never have had enough courage to ask Texas about it!

A plump old colored woman—cook and maid of all work of the Guinan household—hears a fumbling at the set of double locks at the door. She bustles in to open it.

"Good mawnin', honey," she croons. "You is late this mawnin'. Did you-all have a good ride in the pa'k?"

"Hello, Mary, dear. God, I'm tired! Big business last night: had the house full. Get me a glass of hot orange juice, will you, honey?"

Henceforward in this confession or revelation, or whatever it is, Texas is going to be called Texas: for such is the name of the Queen of Broadway. It is strange to hear her call the colored maid "Mary"—she says the name as if she loved it; as if it meant something very dear, almost sacred to her. And despite the lawful, clerical moniker of Mary Louise Cecilia, Tex is called Tex by her family. I suppose it is a habit. Mary, the dusky maid, is the only Mary in the house.

Mary goes into her kitchen while Texas sits in the family living room. There is a rosy coal fire burning quietly in the old-fashioned grate, and Texas drops herself on a couch before it. She slips off her ermine coat, her evening hat, her silver pumps; puts her silken feet on the brass rail of the fireplace, and loses herself in a warm, restful nap.

This living room—it is another shock in this narrative of contrasts! It looks like a Chinese bazaar. Everything is brass, or Oriental embroidery,

or Chinese pottery. The walls are hung with silken draperies, festooned with brass gongs, bells, lanterns. A dozen bronze Buddhas sit somberly in dark corners, brooding. There are a half dozen lights, dimmed, covered by parchment shades and tassels.

Every inch of wall space is filled with things Chinese—tiny temples and pagodas, vases, bowls, censers, jeweled lights, hooded lights, fantastic embroideries of pig-tailed mandarins. A jeweled dagger hangs on the wall.

The atmosphere is entirely pagan. The only Christian touch is supplied by a bowl of red apples on the teakwood table.

### III

THE colored maid brings Texas her warm orange juice, and helps her disrobe. Texas slips on a heavy silk dressing gown—a thing of green and yellow dragons, heavy tapestry work and heady perfume—then enters her bathroom. No rigidly white, efficient bathroom of the modern apartment is this, but an old-fashioned, comfortable bathroom that is warmed to sleepy heat by two electric stoves.

It is fitted like the boudoir of a Parisienne. There are soft cushions everywhere, and this bathroom is big enough for a bedroom, really, and soft enough for one. There are silks and mirrors everywhere in it, and tasseled silk hangings and the pungent, exhilarating elixir of a dozen sorts of exotic perfume.

There is a whole table full of cosmetics, mysterious concoctions to men, and, I fancy, to many women. There is a long row of lip sticks of varied shades and hues, and box after box of powder, and a regiment of big and little, fluffy and firm, powder puffs. There are little French dolls, all of them dressed completely, almost swathed, in crimson chiffon. In one corner, with no attempt at concealment, is a rubber waistlet.

Texas's bedroom is a boudoir of

Madame Pompadour, no less. A big four-poster bed dominates it. It is covered by a heavy velour and silk canopy, deep scarlet in color. At the foot of the bed is a large chest, draped with more deep scarlet stuff, heaped high with large, soft cushions. The floor is covered with heavy, soft carpet of dark color. The walls are done in dark grays; restful, drowsy.

Texas slips between heavy white sheets of starchy linens. The maid lifts a thick silk coverlet tenderly over her, opens a window that is so arranged that my lady gets plenty of fresh air, but no light in her eyes, and softly retires to her kitchen again. It is now about eight o'clock in the morning.

Papa and Mamma Guinan, and brother Tommy—since his own night club has been padlocked by the prohibition authorities—all are stirring. Soon they enter the Chinese living-dining room for their breakfast. Papa Guinan is about sixty-five; a red-cheeked, white-haired, genial old fellow who reads the morning papers over his grapefruit. Spectacled, not as spry as he used to be, he looks the type of the retired grocer of a small middle Western town, a respectable and respected citizen.

He greets Mamma Guinan good morning. Mamma is about sixty, very well preserved, quite active. Her hair is white; her face, though, is scarcely lined; her eyes are keen and good-humored. She is the exact wife for Papa Guinan, retired grocer. In the middle West she would belong to the Ladies Guild and help get up charity bazaars and visit the sick and all that.

Tommy joins them. He is the "kid" brother, about thirty-five, a clean, wholesome type. He looks and acts like the real Westerner that he is. Lacking the hard sophistication of Broadway, he is a strange type to find "in the racket." There is an elder brother, Willie; but he has been in Wall Street for many years, and hard-

ly belongs to this little family group.

Papa reads his paper from one end to the other. Then he gets together with Tommy, and they start on the business end of Texas's finances. They are her bookkeepers and business managers. Mamma Guinan attends to her little duties, and helps tidy up a bit.

Mamma hasn't any particular task, but she assumed responsibility for the welfare of the dancing girls of the night club—"Tex's kids." Every evening before the club opens she is down in the dressing rooms visiting with the girls, making sure that they are not "sittin' in a draft"; that they are in proper health and spirits. Long ago she adopted them as a part of her family. They bring their troubles to her; she mothers them all. Most of them have been with Texas and "in the family" for the last five years.

The day passes, and the clock strikes eight in the evening. Texas awakes, pulls a long, tapestried cord beside her bed, and Mary the maid comes to close the window and light a little gas grate. Texas makes a brief toilet, gets into a luscious dressing gown of red silk with red ostrich feathers ruched about the neck, then slips back into bed again for her meal. Breakfast and lunch in one, it is.

She never eats meat, or potatoes, or much starch in any form; seldom does she eat an egg. For the most part she lives on baked and boiled vegetables. Her menu reads: no bread; no butter; no cream; no sugar; no tea; no coffee. Parsnips she has fried, perhaps; lima beans, spinach; orange or grapefruit juice.

She reads her mail. It comes from over all the country. A girl wants a job dancing in her night club; a woman who has lost her husband but found freedom in the life insurance, believes she would make a "good night club hostess." There are mash notes, letters begging money. Papa and Tommy answer them all.

Now her telephone begins ringing.

She keeps in touch with an extensive acquaintanceship that is not at all of Broadway. That mazda thoroughfare sees and knows her only at midnight and after. She rings up the little florist on Sixth Avenue and orders a bouquet of violets—in midwinter, this is. And a bunch of roses for mamma's dining room table. This is a regular procedure, and the little florist has one other standing order—two tubs of flowers for the Virgin's statue in the solemn old Catholic church down the block, under the "L," the church of the Guinan family. Texas goes regularly.

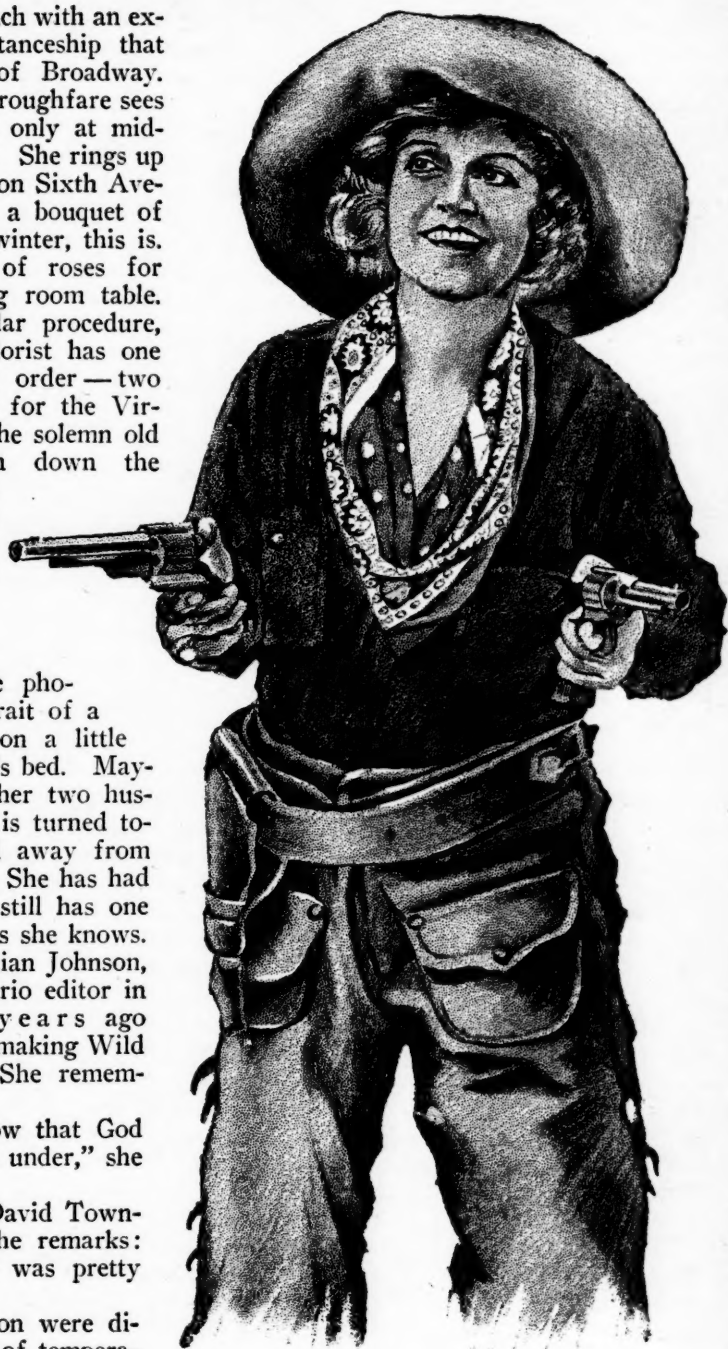
## IV

THERE is the photograph portrait of a handsome man on a little table beside Tex's bed. Maybe it is one of her two husbands—the face is turned toward Texas and away from casual onlookers. She has had two husbands—still has one of them as far as she knows. The first was Julian Johnson, who was a scenario editor in Hollywood ten years ago when Texas was making Wild West pictures. She remembers him:

"Greatest fellow that God ever put two feet under," she declares.

The last was David Townsend. Of him she remarks: "Well, one foot was pretty good!"

She and Johnson were divorced—a matter of temperament. Townsend was a wealthy business man. He struck it rich in Australia and want-



MISS TEXAS GUINAN

in the care-free, simple-hearted days of the Western rodeo

ed Tex to go out there with him. She refused, and they parted, four years ago.

"I wasn't strong for going out there with all the kangaroos," Texas explained. "And he didn't want my family. Papa and mamma and Tommy go wherever I go, or I don't go, that's all. Anyway, a woman who is a money-maker herself shouldn't marry a man who is making money. It won't work!"

Texas reads a lot. There is a volume of poems by Alan Seegar lying on the table beside her. A page is turned down at "Lyonesse," and here is a passage marked:

Past the sea walls  
Grumbled in thundering spray  
Rolled the green waves;  
Ravening—merciless—

Texas walks into the adjoining room—the "parlor." It is an imposing place, filled with austere pictures, statuary, stiff-backed furniture; rows of book shelves. She stops to pick a book from the table, then frowns a little at the arrangement of the volumes.

"Mary has been dusting in here again," she observes. "She always gets my books stood up on the wrong end. I tell her that it is like going away and leaving some of your best friends standing on their heads!"

She is vague on the names of her favorite books. She likes poetry—Seegar, Service, Oscar Wilde.

"I think there is one lovely thing in Oscar Wilde. I want it for my epitaph. Isn't it just like me to pick some fool thing like this? It's from Oscar Wilde's 'The Harlot's House':

"Down the long and silent street  
In her silver sandaled feet  
Crept the Dawn—like a frightened child."

"That's what I want on my tombstone. And I like Joyce Kilmer—the one he wrote: 'Free.' I like that lots."

And it is midnight, and so to the night club, and the rôle of the Queen of Broadway.

Is she conscious of the artificiality of it, the futility of it, any iniquity of it?

"If I didn't enjoy myself every minute of it, it would be the hardest job in the world!" Texas Guinan asserts. "I enjoy myself more than anybody that comes into my club—and I mean that, every word of it. I ought to pay them for letting me work there."

"I like people. I like to see them enjoying themselves. After all, what do we get out of life but a lot of fun? If I thought there was anything wicked in it, I would quit it in a minute. If I thought there was anything wrong about the whole thing, do you suppose I could see papa and mamma and Tommy up there?"

The lady is deeply serious, and you feel that she is entirely sincere in her statement.

"I like to be with people who will laugh and have a good time. I don't care who or what they are—I don't care if they're Armenian rug makers if they'll laugh and be happy."

"I have just one motto in life—play square, and have a heluva good time. I do—and mamma and papa live on my reflex."

"You know, it's all a matter of values. When you begin to lose your sense of values, you lose everything."

In her quieter, more reflective moments, Texas will remember a certain little spot in California where she and Brother Tommy rode in rodeos in their younger days. She confesses a love for the mountains, for the red sky of evening, for the lazy spot in the sun.

## V

TEXAS GUINAN has plenty of money. She could show, no doubt, something better than a quarter of a million cash. She won't always be so full of pep. Suggest retirement to "that little spot in California" to her and she'll laugh, maybe give you a resounding thwack on the back.

"Retire? Say, listen! When I'm



ninety they'll be wheeling me into a night club in a chair, and I'll be saying—'Come on, give this old girl a big hand!'

"Money? I've got enough of it. But if I were to lose every cent and somebody would offer me a million dollars to settle down and be a 'nice lady' and give teas and socials and all that—I'd say: 'Hell, give me back four dollars and I'll start all over again!'"

Mary Louise Cecilia Guinan was born in Waco, Texas. Her mother and father are Irish. She states that eight of her uncles are Catholic priests. She and her two brothers grew up on her father's ranch. He lost his money and moved to Denver.

Mary Louise went into a convent, then away to a refined boarding school in Virginia. Her father's financial condition forced her to leave there, and she started on her own at eighteen. She rode in Western rodeos, won a singing scholarship offered by Marshall Field, attracted the attention of Reginald De Koven, composer, who was one of the scholarship contest judges, and broke into New York theatricals through him, by way of small musical shows.

Later she went into the movies, and became the now famous Texas and "the female Bill Hart." She was a Broadway favorite when the night clubs started, and was persuaded to become the first "night club hostess."

Texas has abandoned the "Great

White Way" only once since she struck it. She, with other folk of the stage, signed up in units to entertain the troops in cantonments over here and in camps "Over There," during the World War. After the Armistice was signed, she came back to New York and became a hostess in a very big way.

Since her name was unmistakably linked with the night club she is in—no matter who may own it—the prohibition enforcement squads have arrested her four times when agents have made "buys" in her club. But in court she has contended, and with some measure of logic, that she was only employed to "make whoopee," and that if liquor was sold, she had nothing to do with it. Hence she has never been convicted, and has had no little fun with her trips into court.

When the prohibition authorities padlocked the last club she was in—the famous Texas Guinan's "300"—she took a brief rest, had her face lifted, and came back to open a new oasis in the desert of night life.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about the Queen of Broadway is that she will tell you her age.

"Why shouldn't I?" she asks. "People would count up on me, anyway! For business reasons I am thirty-seven years old; as a matter of fact I'm thirty-nine. What difference does it make? I'm going to have a good time while I live—if I die tomorrow or live to be a hundred!"



# White Mule



*Magalene Cagle takes a hand in her father's first venture as a bootlegger*

"What kind of a load ye takin', pap?"

By Hodge Mathes



HE peaceful haze of a perfect autumn morning lay upon the Unakas, but the heart of Magalene Cagle was not at peace. The half grown mountain girl stood beside a huge wooden-hooped churn, and her sturdy brown arms plied the dasher vigorously up and down in the shade of the old log spring house; but Magalene's mind was not on her churning.

Now and then she turned to cast an anxious glance toward the weather-beaten house that stood at a little distance. The smoke of Maw Cagle's breakfast fire still curled lazily from

the stone chimney, and her whining voice could be heard as she directed the younger children to their morning tasks.

It was not about her mother, however, that Magalene was troubled, but about her father. Amos Cagle was reputed a hard-working, quiet-spoken citizen and an exemplary husband and parent. For all that Magalene, his first-born, was worried about him.

For three weeks or more she had been keeping a solicitous eye upon his movements. Morning after morning she had seen him leave the house after breakfast and, with his rifle on his shoulder, stalk up the twisting trail

that led to nowhere in particular, as far as anybody knew. He was supposed to be working on a contract to get out chestnut telephone poles; but in her seventeen years Magalene had observed that pole cutters usually took axes to the woods, instead of rifles.

Once she had ventured to question her mother on the subject, but the tired-faced, meek-eyed mountain woman had shut her up almost fiercely.

"Tain't none o' yore business to be projeckin' into yer pappy's doin's. You 'tend to yourn an' he'll look atter hisn. I hain't never axed him what he's a doin', an' I don't aim to."

That was Tildy Cagle's wifely philosophy. Like many another dutiful spouse in the hills, she would keep her man's secrets as close as a tomb whenever he chose to divulge them to her. Were he in hiding as an outlaw or a fugitive from the pursuing law, she would come to him with food or tidings at peril of her life; but never would she question him as to his plans.

"I don't know what he 'lows to do. I hain't heard him name hit"—so speaks the Penelope of the Unakas.

Magalene, however, had a queer habit of thinking things out for herself. Perhaps it was because she was nearly ten years old, the eldest of eight children, and partly also because she had been "out" to school for two years, and had picked up ideas and notions about various things.

At any rate she kept eying the barnyard gate as she tended the churn, and the little furrow of anxiety between her hazel eyes grew deeper as she waited.

Presently her ears caught the bumping of wheels on the loose stones, and a moment later her father's old canvas-topped wagon, drawn by two raw-boned bays, rumbled out of the barn lot. Amos drew rein by the spring house and climbed down from his seat under the arch of the wagon bows.

"Be a good gal, Magalene, an' he's yer mammy all ye can," he said with

a kindliness that belied the gruffness of his tone. "If I sell my load to-day, I'll try to fetch ye some purties—maybe a new dress an' them stockin's ye been wantin'."

The girl smiled, but her voice was close to tears as she spoke.

"What kind of a load ye takin', pap?" she inquired.

"About twenty-five bushel of apples," the man replied, as he took up a link in the trace chain of the off horse.

"I thought ye said t'other day the apples was sich a sorry crap this year ye didn't aim to wagon 'em to town," the girl argued.

"They ain't much, fer a fact, but they'll bring a little bit o' cash money—better'n lettin' 'em lay an' rot."

"I'm afeared they won't bring enough to pay fer haulin' 'em, pap, sayin' nothin' of buyin' no dresses an' things. I don't want ye should bother 'bout bringin' me nothin'."

"Well, we'll jes' wait an' see how hit comes out," Amos answered. He was in the act of mounting to his seat again when he suddenly turned. "Aw, shucks!" he exclaimed. "I was fergittin' somethin'. I'll have to go up to the sheep house in the upper dead-enin' an' git a half bushel to measure these here apples in. Jes' tend the hosses while I'm gone, Magalene, an' don't let nobody come messin' around the load. I'll be back in fifteen minutes."

Left on guard with the wagon and team, the girl went back to her churn, a dozen steps away. The butter had come, and she began to dress the golden-yellow mass and press it into the wooden molds. She washed her hands at the spring branch and dried them on her apron. Then a sudden curiosity seized her.

"Maw'd break my neck, I reckon, but I'm p'intedly bound to take one look," she said to herself.

Stepping to the back of the wagon with furtive haste, she thrust her hands under the wagon sheet and into the

bundles of fodder that lined the rough bed in which the apples were piled. The apples, she saw at a glance, were miserably faulty and bruised. They would be nothing but cider pomace after being jolted over the twenty miles of rocks and ruts that led to Crockettburg, the county seat village.

In a moment, however, the girl's fingers touched something else. She did not need to uncover the hard object to know what it was—a two-gallon stone jug corked with a short length of corn-cob. A second later she felt another jug, and then a third. She drew the nearest one close and bent toward it with her nose. The eloquent fragrance of the saturated corn-cob stopper told her all she cared to know.

"So pap's went an' tuck to blockadin'!" she muttered, trembling with excitement, and with something between terror and anger. "Them's the telephone poles he's been gittin' out!"

Grimly she replaced the covering of fodder blades. Going to the spring, she set a crock containing the new-made butter on a flat stone in the cold water. Then she brought out two large empty milk jars and placed them beside the churn. She could not keep back the big tears that rolled down her cheeks and fell upon the grass.

"What's got into pap?" she asked herself. "He's allus hated the name of a blockader. I never drempt' he'd git into hit. Hit don't never git nobody in nothin' but trouble—he ought to have sense enough to know that!"

Then, as if conscience-smitten after such an outburst of unfilial indignation, she continued her half audible soliloquy in a sobbing undertone.

"Pore pap! Ever'thing on this here tore-down ol' place has went bad fer him this year. The freeze killed the fruit, the big tide washed the hay away, the drought ruined the tobacker, an' the cholery killed most of the fattenin' hawgs. On top of that, ol' Cam Briggs talked pap into goin' his security on that note, an' then pulled out

an' left him to pay twelve hunderd dollars at the bank. 'Tain't much wonder he tuck up with moonshinin', but hit's goin' to land him in the jail house!"

She rinsed the heavy jars with fresh water. Magalene could think better when her hands were busy.

"I know he don't like this business nary bit better'n I do," she went on. "He's doin' hit jes' so's he can give maw an' us young uns a chance. Six gallon o' white corn liquor—ten dollar a gallon—law, hit's wuth more'n them wormy apples an' the ol' wagon throwed in! I reckon he *could* git me some purties if he sold hit, an' the good Lord knows I need 'em!"

Magalene glanced down at her ragged skirt and her bare, shapely legs, golden-brown from a summer of stockingless exposure to sun and wind.

"An' maw an' Virgie an' Rutheeny an' all the balance is as nigh naked as I am," she said.

Far up the mountainside, at that moment, she saw her father striding across the deadening toward the sheep house. He would be back in a few minutes; and at the thought of his setting out on his first dangerous journey as a purveyor of illicit "mountain dew," her tears started afresh.

"I'd rather than a million dollars he wouldn't 'a' got into this! I'd rather wear these ol' rags till they fell plumb off o' me!"

Then a sudden light of decision shone in her face, and she dried her eyes with one of the few unsoiled spots in her apron.

"I ain't goin' to see my pap buy me no clo'es with blockade money," she declared. "An' he ain't goin' to no jail house to-night if I can he'p it!"

## II

In the outskirts of the straggling village of Crockettburg stood an old wooden building, which, having gone the way of all good livery stables, was now a combination of filling station,



garage, and blacksmith shop, known as Phil's Place. Its red-lettered sign admonished the passing motorist to "stop and fill with Phil."

There were, it may be said, underground rumors afloat to the effect that this cordial invitation to the fleeting traveler might on occasion suggest the replenishing of dry receptacles other than gasoline tanks. To the wisecracks of the village, at least it seemed hardly credible that the amazing popularity of Phil's Place with the tourists who slowed down and stopped there was wholly attributable to the superiority of its gas and oil or the exceptional skill of Phil Forbush, the grizzled proprietor, who was really a blacksmith by tradition and training and a garage owner by force of circumstances.

The front of the converted livery stable, facing the highway, was usually filled with cars and motorists. The rear end opened upon an inclosed space known as the "swappin' lot," and used as the rendezvous of the mountain farmers who came in their covered wagons for "truckin' an' tradin'." Phil's Place had thus become the meeting point for the rubber-tired present and the steel-tired past, and was the busiest spot in the sleepy municipality of Crockettburg.

It was high noon when Amos Cagle's apple schooner, with all canvas set, sailed into the haven of the "swappin' lot." Phil Forbush, always on the alert to adjust a carburetor or supply a hamestring, approached, his leather apron flapping in the wind.

"Howdy, Amos? What fer ye to-day?" he inquired, with a professional glance at the horses' feet.

"Nothin' much, I reckon," Amos drawled. "Jes' drapped in to blow the hosses a minute. Needin' any apples—or somethin' thataway?"

"Guess not to-day," replied Phil. "Been several wagons in ahead of ye. Ye must 'a' got a late start this mornin'."

"Did. I'd ought to 'a' loaded up las' night. They ain't nothin' else ye'd be carin' fer, I reckon?"

Amos was trying to appear casual, but was awkwardly hesitant. A seasoned "shiner" would have carried it off with charming nonchalance, but Amos was a green hand.

Forbush looked at the mountaineer quizzically. He knew everybody who patronized his place, and what manner of cargo each was wont to bring.

"What else ye got, Amos? Some sarghum or tree molasses, or somethin'?"

"Yeah, somethin'."

By dint of considerable outward effort and with much inward trepidation, Amos managed to achieve an unmistakable wink. Phil's bewhiskered face cracked open with a broad grin that stretched into a hearty guffaw.

"Well, dad burn my hide, Amos! *You* hain't tuck to bilin' the ol' copper kittle of nights, have ye?"

"Had to do somethin' to keep from bein' sold out by the high sheriff," replied Amos soberly. "I don't favor hit, but hit's that or somethin' worse, times like these."

"Yeah, hit gits the best of 'em nowadays," Phil agreed; "but I'm sort o' hatin' to see ye follerin' hit, Amos. Hit's gittin' more dangerous here lately. They say they's revenooers workin' in this county right now, an' I'm lookin' to git raided 'most any day. I've quit storin' any stuff here. All I do is give some of these tourin' fellers the high sign an' let 'em do their own tradin' off o' some wagon' that comes in. I'd shore hate to see *you* git in trouble."

"Yeah, I'd hate it myself. My women folks is turrible ag'in' hit, specially the oldest gal. She hain't got no idee I ever made a drap; but a man's got to chance somethin' to git somethin'. I 'low I ain't likely to git cotch the fust time, anyhow."

The honk of a motor horn sounded from the front. Phil turned to wait

upon a well-dressed stranger who had stepped out of a smart-looking roadster.

"Jes' you wait here, Amos, till I see what that feller wants," he ordered.

In a few minutes he returned with the stranger.

"Amos," he began, "here's a gent that's driv a right smart ways, an' he 'lows he might like a apple or somethin' to take the dust out o' his goozle. Maybe him an' you could do some tradin'."

The motorist glanced curiously at the mountaineer and his quaint outfit, and came to the point at once.

"Old man, I'm as dry as a bone. Have you anything that's good for a large-sized thirst?"

"Mister," Amos confided, "I've got a leetle home-made medicine that's gorranteed fer that complaint."

"What do you call it?" queried the thirsty one, who was evidently a "furriner" from the distant world beyond the mountains.

"Hit's what a heap o' people calls white mule. Hit's made out o' corn."

"Is it absolutely pure?"

"Jest as pure an' purty an' white as was ever run into a jug, mister. Hit wouldn't hurt a sick man or a baby."

Amos had loosed the end gate of the wagon and brought forth one of the jugs. The stranger bent toward it, and the whiff from the corncob was evidently reassuring.

"All right, old man! I'll take the jug. How much is it?"

The canny Amos at this stage proceeded cautiously.

"Well, I want jes' what's right an' fair. Course ye understand hit costs a right smart to make good stuff, an' likewise to haul hit sich a long ways. Resky, too, ye know."

"Certainly, I understand that," the outlander conceded. "Name your price. If it's right, we'll trade."

"Now, mister," Amos haggled in true Scotch-Irish style, "you're a city man, an' ye know what the stuff

fetches in town. I'd ruther ye'd make me a offer. I'm confident ye're a squar man."

"Well, I can buy all I want at ten dollars a gallon," the customer countered. "How does that strike you?"

"I 'low that's reasonable," assented Amos, with no outward betrayal of the satisfaction he inwardly felt.

The purchaser drew a crisp twenty-dollar note from a roll and handed it to the mountaineer. Phil Forbush stood by, an interested spectator.

"That closes the trade, old man?" queried the stranger.

"Yes, sir, that seals hit tight, I reckon. Want me to tote the jug an' put hit in yer cyar?"

"No! Leave it where it is!" commanded the stranger in a sudden tone of authority. "And you stand still where *you* are. You're under arrest!"

Throwing open his coat, he exhibited the shiny badge of a deputy revenue collector. The crestfallen mountaineer gulped in astonishment. Then he began to see red.

"Ye infernal yaller hound!" he roared, and made a motion toward the wagon, where his rifle lay beneath the fodder under the seat.

"Steady, old man!" The officer's voice was cool and his manner ominously quiet. "You've made one mistake to-day. Don't make another!"

"No, Amos, don't try to start nothin'," the friendly Phil cautioned. "Hit's yer fust offense, an' the court ain't apt to give ye a heavy sentence. Jes' take hit ca'm."

"Ca'm the devil!" bellowed Amos, out of his senses with blind rage. "I sold ye what ye axed fer, at yer own figger. Ye durn sneakin', ornery reptile! Nobody but a low-born son—"

"Shet up, Amos!" ordered Phil sharply, being one who knew the inside as well as the outside of the situation. "Ye're actin' the fool an' ruinin' yer case. He hain't tuck ye with no warrant yit, ner told ye what ye're charged with. Talk civil to him!"

"We don't need any warrant," snapped the deputy. "I've caught the man with the goods on him."

"Ye hain't examined the goods yit," argued Phil.

"I guess I know corn liquor when I smell it! We'll just take another look, though, to clear up this gentleman's doubts. Get me a cup."

Forbush, greatly distressed both because of the raid on his own place and also because of a good neighbor's unhappy plight, hastened to his little office up front and returned quickly with a tumbler. He was followed by a score of patrons and hangers-on who had been tipped off as to what was going on.

The officer took the glass and pulled hard at the redolent stopper of the jug, which came out with a noisy *poong*. Tipping the jug, he poured a small quantity of its contents into the tumbler.

Three separate and distinct gasps broke the dramatic silence that had fallen upon the group—one from the astonished representative of the law, one from the mystified proprietor, and one—the loudest of all—from the dumfounded mountaineer.

"What in thunder?" demanded the officer.

"What the Sam Hill?" stammered Phil Forbush.

"What the devil an' Tom Walker?" sputtered Amos Cagle.

From the mouth of the jug there trickled a foamy stream of snow-white buttermilk!

### III

AMOS was the first of the trio to regain his composure. In a second he was grinning amiably at the officer.

"Ye see, mister, I was tellin' ye the God's truth. I said hit was the purest, purtiest, whitest stuff that was ever run into a jug. I told ye hit wouldn't hurt a sick man ner a baby!"

The deputy, however, was not to be duped by the old trick of one dummy

container in a cargo of illicit spirits. He quickly fished out the two remaining jugs from the wagon and drew the stoppers. When they, too, had poured forth their milky libation he turned angrily upon Cagle.

"See here, my man, do you think you can put a job like that over on a Federal officer? Do you expect me to believe you came all the way from the mountains just to bring this load of rotten apples and a little buttermilk?"

"Well, mister," chuckled Amos, "if ye ain't satisfied with what ye've bought to quinch yer thirst with, here's yer twenty back. I wasn't aimin' to keep hit, nohow. I was jest a devilin' ye a little, not knowin' who ye was, an' you not troublin' to interdooce yerself."

By this time the spectators began to roar their mirth. It was apparent to them that Amos had perpetrated a clever practical joke upon a "revenooer"—a natural enemy of their species—and they were prepared to enjoy it to the limit.

Then Phil Forbush, though he hadn't the slightest idea how it had all happened, saw his chance to complete the vindication of his friend, and incidentally to clear his own establishment from suspicion.

"Mister," he said, when the laughter had abated somewhat, "you must excuse me an' Amos fer havin' our devilmint. I've knowed Amos Cagle fer forty year—knowed his daddy before him. They never was a Cagle that I ever heard of that was a blockader. They're ag'in' it, same as I am. I wouldn't allow no man to fetch nary drap of the pizen stuff on this place."

The embodiment of the majesty of these United States now proceeded to prove himself a human being and a good sport. He could take a joke.

"That's all right, old man! The laugh is on me. If you'll find some more cups, we'll dispose of a gallon or so of the evidence, at the expense of

the government; and I hope my friend here will be as lucky the next time!"

"They ain' goin' to be no next time," responded Amos dryly, as he climbed to his seat and clucked to his horses. "Reckon I'll have to be spudin' along if I'm goin' to sell the balance of this here white mule!"

An hour later, having peddled his wares up and down Crockettburg's narrow main street, Amos was preparing to set out for home.

"Don't look like I'd buy any purties fer the gal," he thought, as he counted the few one-dollar bills and the handful of "chicken feed" that he had realized from his day's work. "But if hit hadn't 'a' been fer her impudence I'd 'a' slep' to-night in a jail house! By gonnies, I'm goin' to git her some-thin' if hit busts me!"

He had hitched his team behind the courthouse, and was walking down the street toward the Beehive, the chief emporium of the mountain metropolis. As he passed the Citizens' Bank, he was accosted by the vice president, cashier, assistant cashier, paying teller, receiving teller, and bookkeeper, all these officials being combined in the ample proportions of Milt Lovingood. Milt was in the act of locking the outside door preparatory to entering his flivver and going home for the day. Seeing Amos, however, he hailed the mountaineer familiarly.

"Hello there, Amos! You're just the man I'm looking for. I was going to write you a letter in the morning. Step inside a minute."

Amos, whose only connection with a bank had been when he had been compelled to pay Cam Briggs's twelve-

hundred-dollar note, followed Lovin-good with misgivings.

"Ye ain't wantin' me to pay off another note, air ye, Milt?" he asked timorously.

"Well, not exactly that," the banker replied banteringly; "although it is in connection with that Briggs' note that I wanted to see you."

"I don't never want to hear that skunk's name agin," growled Amos sullenly. "He ruined me—ye know that."

"But, Amos, I rather thought you'd be glad to hear his name at least *once* more."

"What's he went an' done now? D'ye know whar he is? If ye do, I reckon I'll take my ol' rifle gun an' go polecat huntin'."

"That won't be necessary. Amos, I've got some good news for you. I had a letter to-day from Cam. He's been out in New Mexico, and he's either struck oil or got religion, I don't know which. Anyhow, he sent a draft to cover all the debts he left here. If you'll just sign these papers, I'll turn over your twelve hundred right now, with seventy-two dollars for a year's interest."

Amos Cagle's throat muscles were working strangely, and it was a full minute before he could speak. Then, with a voice as shaky as the huge fist that scrawled his signature, he gulped:

"Jes' put the twelve hunderd on deposit, Milt, an' give me the seventy-two in cash money. I reckon ye'll think I've went crazy, but I'm goin' down to the Beehive an' buy that gal of mine the gol-durnedest, ripsnortin'-est dress they've got in this dad-blamed town!"



#### FORGIVENESS

Your love may forgive your offense,  
You may think it is over and done,  
But she'll never forget she forgave—  
Your punishment's only begun!

E. G. Johnston





In the far-off days of the feather-stuffed ball

# Why Change the Golf Ball?

By George Trevor

Author of "The Greatest Football Player of All Time," etc.



UNE at St. Andrews in the year 1858. The cold, gray waves of the North Sea roll shoreward with a sound like muffled drums. Overhead sea gulls scream, wheeling and banking, living harbingers of what man would do mechanically fifty odd years later. Yonder one glimpses the Bay of Eden, dotted with fishing smacks.

A picturesque figure in rough tweeds trudges up to the home green. He wears a rumpled jacket, a loose

vest, long trousers that bag about the knees and fall in ample wrinkles down to the instep. His bow tie is twisted askew. His luxurious hair, parted at the left temple, blends in one unbroken sweep into flowing whiskers which fringe his austere, ascetic features, meeting under his chin like the strings of a sunbonnet.

From this bushy frame, eyes of a flinty brightness regard the beholder quizzically. You are looking at Allan Robertson, foremost golfer of his age, professional champion of Scotland,

last of the feather ball Mohicans.

There on the scraggy green—a green which would evoke sulphurous adjectives from the pampered duffer of today—lies the ball, the objective of Robertson's gimlet stare. And what a ball! A lopsided sphere, this, bulging clumsily at the seams, unresilient as a croquet ball to the touch, a parody on the dimpled beauty that bedevils the modern golfer.

Crude it may be, ungainly as a dinosaur's egg to the eye, yet Robertson is proud of it, inordinately proud. You would be too if you had made it, as he did, with your own hands. To Allan Robertson, that unsymmetrical ball is his means of livelihood as well as a thing of beauty. For this feather-stuffed sphere he feels the affection that an artist has for a favorite canvas; that an artisan has for a job that can be translated into bread and butter.

Very deliberately, Robertson surveys the line of his putt. Methodically he studies each dip and miniature hillock separating that odd looking ball from the crudely cut cup. A few spectators, funereal figures in silken stovepipe hats, stand reverently at the green-side. To judge from their sober faces they might be attending divine service in the town kirk.

A lark's rapturous notes burst from a patch of whins near by. So joyous a song seems incongruous in this austere setting. It is as though a choir boy had interrupted the preacher's sermon with a spontaneous solo.

Robertson glowers in the direction of the untactful bird. He mutters to himself. He exchanges his grotesquely padded loft for a putter that would look odd to modern eyes. The blade of this weird weapon is amazingly long and narrow.

With exasperating deliberation, Allan takes his stance. He is not to be hurried into stroking the putt that is to echo down the golfing ages. At last he strikes the ball, a firm, even blow.

Bystanders forget to breathe as they

watch the bloated sphere bobble uncertainly toward the cup. There is a churchyard hush as it hesitates on the brink. Fate is kind. With a satisfying *cluck* the ball tumbles into the tin. Hand claps crackle. The ghost of a smile flits across Robertson's dour face.

"Weel done, Allan!" says an onlooker as casually as you would say, "Make mine the same." A less reserved spectator grasps Robertson's gnarled hand, saying: "This 'll nae be guid news to the gutty ball haethen. Ye'll go down in history as the furst mon to break eighty and ye did it wi' the despised feather ball."

## II

FADE out on Allan Robertson, who died a year after making that epic 79 on the "auld gray links." Lower the curtain to indicate the lapse of seventy years.

Iris in on the same setting, the home green at St. Andrews in June, 1927. Around that emerald expanse of turf spectators are massed ten deep. Neighboring bunkers and sand dunes are black with humanity. Within a quarter mile circuit of the eighteenth green, ten thousand jostling, elbowing golf enthusiasts struggle to be in at the death.

Par is being murdered, traditions desecrated, on this desolate stretch of moors lying along the Firth of Forth. A tousle-haired, stocky youngster from Atlanta, Georgia, with a fine contempt for ivy-thatched reputations, is holding old St. Andrews up to ridicule, drawing the fangs of the once ferocious links, tweaking its grassy whiskers, acting up shamelessly.

It is sacrilege, but it is also art. Squeeze through the living hedge that frames the green, if you can, and tell us what you see. A fair-haired, suntanned hatless boy, in gray knickers and a polo shirt open at the neck, eh? He has a five-footer for a 285, you say?

Did he make it? There is no need

to answer. That spontaneous roar tells the story. Can these be the close-mouthed, aloof Scots who are popularly supposed to repress their emotions? They are gibbering and gyrating like moonstruck savages. Volatile Latins never made a bigger fuss.

The human circle becomes a maelstrom, its vortex seething about the white-shirted sinker of that putt. Now he is swirled aloft on willing shoulders, carried in triumph toward the granite clubhouse.

"Aye, a braw laddie, that Bobby Jones," says a white-haired veteran on the fringe of the frenzied marchers, "worthy to sit alongside our ain Tommy Morris. Mind ye, I'm no concedin' that Jones is the better mon of the twa. Dinna forget that Tommy Morris was handicapped by the gutty. Hoot mon, de yer ken what Tommy could hae scored wi' the rabbit ball that Bobby used to-day?"

Racial prejudice may have colored that old Scot's point of view a bit, but he was partly right. The tightly wound, perfectly molded, meticulously balanced ball of the modern era was no small factor in Bobby Jones's precedent smashing 285 at St. Andrews for the 72 holes of medal play that constitute the British open championship.

Granting Jones's genius as a shot maker, the matchless Atlantan could not have averaged a fraction more than 71 strokes per round with any golf ball which existed prior to the post-war refinement of the Haskell invented rubber core.

It is indeed a far cry from the lopsided, unbalanced, feather-stuffed golf ball of Allan Robertson's era to the scientifically exact golf ball of Bobby Jones's age, with its center of gravity located plumb in the heart of its tension-wound core.

Expressed in distance, the modern jack rabbit will outrange the feather 250 yards to 160. It took an expert shot maker to make the feather ball behave. The average club member of

to-day would quit at the third hole if forced to use the missile which our Allan Robertson regarded with a feeling akin to reverence.

Allan's interest in "the feather" was commercial as well as artistic. This canny Scotchman enjoyed a monopoly in the making of feather balls at St. Andrews. One year Robertson and his helpers turned out 2,456 of the feather-stuffed spheres. That supply would have lasted less than a month at any modern golf club, yet the rough is nothing like as brackish to-day as were the tough whins and furze patches of the fifties.

You may well believe that the thrifty Scots of the stovepipe hat era did not light-heartedly abandon the search for a ball that cost from two to four shillings. Many a time play was suspended for an hour while searching parties beat the bush for the elusive leather ball. When a man lost his second "feather" he simply sheathed his clubs and called it a day. Spendthrifts were not encouraged at old St. Andrews.

The making of a feather ball was a fine art rather than an exact science. Families had their own pet formulas, and handed them down from father to son.

Untanned bull's hide was used for the cover. After being softened in a solution of alum and water, the leather was cut into three strips and sewn together with waxed thread. The strips were turned inside out so that the seams would be within the cover.

An unbelievable mass of soft-boiled chicken feathers was poked through a tiny opening in the envelope by means of a steel prong. When the sack would hold no more feathers, the hole was sewn up, the cover hammered into a rough sphere and painted white.

Bob Zupke says that the American intercollegiate football has a "funny shape." Any halfback who has ever fumbled one will second the motion. One wonders what "Zupp" would

have said about the feather balls which succeeded the pebbles that Scotch shepherds once used to hit along the moors with the business end of their crooks.

The feather ball was theoretically supposed to be a nicely balanced sphere, but, in its case, fact and theory seldom agreed. Those fortunate enough to get their hands on a ball that was really round, cherished the missile as a darky does a rabbit's foot. Unhappily, a certain proportion of the feathered flyers had corners. They would have fitted in well with the ideas of Christopher Columbus's detractors.

Nobody knows when the feather ball first came into being. In the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, this entry appears under date of February 3, 1503: "Item to Golf Clubbis and Feather Ballis to the King that he playit with—nine shillings." Evidently the good monarch didn't have to go to Florida to get in a round of winter golf.

A tightly packed feather ball was as hard as ebony to the touch, but the jacket was readily hacked by the iron blade. Wet weather was bad news for the "feathers." In the rain they soon became soggy, sodden pellets, lacking any vestige of life.

Under a lusty baffy crack they were apt to burst their seams and shed their feathers as promiscuously as a moulting canary. This was a tender point with Allan Robertson. He stoutly averred that a golf ball wasn't meant to swim.

### III

It was a black day for Robby when the gutta percha ball was first introduced to golfers. He sensed its coming popularity, but with typical Scotch tenacity he clung to the feather ball and retreated stubbornly, fighting the intruder every step of the way.

Historians disagree as to who originated the gutty. A majority credit Sir Thomas Moncrieffe, a rubber gum merchant, with having conceived the

idea of hammering out a solid sphere from a slab of gutta percha. The gutty appeared at St. Andrews in 1848.

Robertson set his face like flint against this "heathenish contraption." He got his assistant, "Old Tom" Morris, to pledge himself not to use the outlandish ball.

"This gutty will be the ruination o' gowf!" exclaimed Robertson petulantly. "It runs sae lang it puts brute power above skill."

That wail is strangely familiar to modern golfers, and we hear the same argument used against the jack rabbit ball. With each step in the golf ball's evolution dissenters dust off Allan's protest and shout from the bunker tops: "You are killing the game!"

Well, golf must have more lives than an alley cat. It has survived three radical changes in the ball and flourishes like the cedars of Lebanon.

Robertson neglected to mention the "bawbees" his pocketbook would miss if the gutty displaced the "feather." He was no more successful in stemming the vogue of the gutta percha ball than was King Canute in staying the march of the tide.

The feather ball is now as extinct as the great auk and the dodo. You will find a few examples of Robertson's craftsmanship in museums and sport equipment collections. T. Sufferin Tailor, of Newport, paid two hundred dollars for a feather-stuffed, hand-hammered sphere.

Skeptics who refuse to believe that such a clumsy-looking missile could be controlled have only to study Allan Robertson's lifetime "selective" card for the St. Andrews links. The figures represent the best score he ever made on any specific hole during his career. Read 'em and weep, ye duffers of to-day:

|           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Out ..... | 333—344—313—27    |
| In .....  | 323—443—343—29—56 |

You will note that Robertson is eligible for posthumous membership in



the "hole in one club." Evidently the feather ball responded to the touch of genius. Its devotees claimed that, despite its irregular contours, the stuffed leather sphere was easier to putt with than the gutty.

How far could a feather ball be driven? Two years before Waterloo, an amateur named Lang wagered that he could drive 165 yards at least once in ten tries. If an amateur could get that yardage in 1813, it is reasonable to believe that the "pros" of 1850 were good for 180 yards with the feathers.

The advent of the gutty ball increased the driving range from thirty to forty yards. It widened the scope of golf's appeal, attracting players who wouldn't have been able to manage the erratic, sluggish "feather." As the implements of the game steadily improve the requisite margin of skill needed to "break 100" diminishes in inverse ratio.

The gutty ball was responsible for the feud between Allan Robertson and old Tom Morris. Playing a friendly match with a pupil, one day, Tom ran short of feather balls. His protégé offered him a gutty. Forgetting his promise to Robertson, Tom proceeded to drive the forbidden gutta percha. He surrendered at once to its charms.

As luck would have it, Robertson chanced to see this sacrilege committed. "We had high words about it in his shop," said Morris, "and parted company that night. He wouldn't speak to me for years."

Employing the gutty, young Tom Morris scored a 77 at St. Andrews in 1869, beating the feather ball record of Robertson which had stood for ten seasons. Young Tom's mark withstood all onslaughts until 1888, when Hugh Kirkaldy circled St. Andrews in a snappy 74. Willie Auchterlonie's 71, scored in 1897, remains the high-water mark of achievement with the gutta percha sphere at St. Andrews.

Some of golf's brightest champions

lived and died during the gutty régime. Besides the two Morrises, there were David Strath, whose name is perpetuated by a malicious bunker; Willie Park, Jimmy Anderson, Tom Kidd, Andra Kirkaldy, and Bob Martin.

Vardon, Braid, and Taylor, Britain's mighty triumvirate, learned the game with the gutty and graduated to the rubber core. Golf has known no greater shot makers than these Homeric figures of the transition period. They were not dependent upon mechanical appliances for their success. Gutty or rubber core—it was all the same to them.

With the solid, unresilient gutta percha globe they achieved results proportionately equal to their scores with the more responsive Haskell ball. They were — and still are — golfing artists rather than golf mechanics.

The inside bark of the rubber tree, not the sap, was used in making the gutty. At first it was a solid, homogeneous sphere, the same substance clear through from cover to heart as that used for the outer core of the Haskell ball.

Later acids were introduced to give the gutty more resiliency. The formulas involving these acid preparations were closely guarded chemical secrets. Lurid stories passed from mouth to mouth concerning balls that had "exploded" in the hands of children. Like the nebulous "Russian Army" supposed to have debarked in England during the Great War, these "exploding ball" yarns were products of a lively imagination.

A few embryonic chemical engineers, from ten to fifteen years of age, lost their eyesight while dissecting the gutty "to see what it was made of." The acid spurted out. It was poisonous to delicate tissues.

Rain didn't bother the impervious gutty. It sailed just as far at the end of a soppy afternoon as at the start. This all-weather quality proved a big asset, for North Sea winds are nearly

always moisture laden, and delight in laying down a dank drizzle impartially upon dub and expert. A ball that wouldn't disintegrate during a sustained Scotch mist—we Americans would call that mist an exceedingly damp rain—was certain to take the British Isles by storm.

But the gutty had its foibles. The original ball had a smooth cover, innocent of markings. This unadorned sphere had a pesky habit of dipping and ducking after boring straight ahead for a hundred yards. At first it was supposed that these weird gyrations and eerie tangents were due to faulty stroke execution, but an observant golfer soon discovered that a ball scarred or gashed by the iron was immune to these vagaries.

#### IV

CREDIT a harness maker at Carnoustie with the practical application of the "cut cover theory." This ingenious saddler hammered the surface of the ball with the pointed end of a chisel. The pill looked as if it had survived a savage case of smallpox, but it flew as straight as an arrow to its mark if truly hit. Gone was the dip of death, the abrupt nose dive that had tantalized apostles of the gutta percha ball.

As soon as manufacturers learned that a lacerated cover was the proper antidote for the gutty's witch ducking proclivities, all manner of fantastic designs were tattooed upon its rubber face. Imagination ran riot. Here was a ball dimpled like a flapper's knee, 1929 model; here was another cross-hatched with slender ribs; here was one checkered with interlocking squares; and here one studded with tiny pimples.

Now the purpose of both the concave and the convex patterns used on golf balls is identical—to grip the air through the creation of "vacuum cups." How many of my readers know that an airplane is supported in flight by a pull upon the upper surface

of the wing rather than by a thrust from beneath? The curved camber of the wing creates a vacuum above the upper edge as it cuts through the air. A plane is suspended by the drag of the air rushing in to fill the vacuum.

It is misleading to picture the plane as pushed up by air striking the under surface of the wings. Students of aerodynamics speak of "lift," not "push."

Precisely the same physical law governs the flight of a golf ball. A smooth, unnotched surface creates little vacuum atop the ball as it spins through the air, hence the downward dip when momentum wanes.

Nicks and indentations create the desired vacuum. The air exerts a pull upon the ball which keeps it traveling along a fixed trajectory. There's a reason, you see, for those fancy markings which intrigue the duffer's eye. Without those patterns the ball wouldn't fly as straight or as far.

It remains for some Einstein among golf equipment makers to evolve magic markings capable of discounting that accursed slice which duuffers insist upon imparting to the ball. When that happens you may be sure the millennium is at hand.

Properly driven, the gutty used to bite off between 180 and 230 yards. Ruthian sluggers such as Jamie Braid and Ted Blackwell occasionally got considerably more. Captain Blackwell was renowned as a slugger. He could punish a gutty as Babe Ruth larrups a straight one "in the groove."

It was with the now ridiculed gutty that Blackwell cannonaded a 366-yard drive from the seventeenth tee at St. Andrews. "That was the longest tee shot I ever hit," said the man whom Travis beat at Sandwich. The good captain didn't think it necessary to mention that the course was sunbaked and that half a gale was blowing behind the ball.

Blackwell's feats were exceptional. According to John Low, "It was a

man's job to drive a gutty ball 180 yards. To-day any frail lad can get that length handily with the rubber core.

"The jack rabbit has made golf a less virile test as well as a less scientific trial of skill. In gutty days a golfer had to be something of an athlete. Strength was as essential as finesse. You not only had to hit the gutty hard, you had to hit it exactly right or it wouldn't go at all.

"The worst feature of the modern ball is the distance it travels from a palpable mishit. With the rubber core you can top a drive and still get a lot of yardage."

The gutty didn't have the kick its lineal successor brags, but it did its master's bidding in a bunker. On explosion shots from sand, with a steep bank to clear, the gutty was more amenable than the rubber core. The jack rabbit leaps off the niblick face so quickly that the trapped golfer is apt to overhit the green.

## V

WITH the turn of the century came the Haskell ball to do unto the gutty what the gutta percha pill had done to the feather-stuffed sphere. The Spanish-American war was distracting the minds of energetic Americans from sports when Coburn Haskell, of Cleveland, decided it would be a corking stunt to put a rubber-wound core inside a gutta percha cover.

He got the idea from dissecting a baseball which had a string center, tightly wound, within a horse hide cover. Applying this two-piece principle to a golf ball, Haskell put his revolutionary product on the market late in 1899. Through the assistance of a rubber manufacturer a machine had been devised which would wind the strips of rubber evenly and tautly.

The first Haskells, greeted with a barrage of ridicule from the conservative old guard, were a flat failure, if you will pardon the misleading meta-

phor. They ducked and nose dived as the smooth guttys once did. "Markings too shallow," was the diagnosis. Heavy paint had closed up the indentations in the cover so that the air couldn't grip the ball.

The Haskell might have faded away to an early grave like little Eva, if Dave Foulis, professional at the Chicago Golf Club, hadn't taken the new ball and remolded the cover so that a deep mesh pattern replaced the light stamp used by the inventor. The effect was magical. The deeply gored Haskells swept the country even as the bicycle craze had done a decade before.

In vain gutty makers tried to stem the landslide by protests to the rules committee, by ridiculing the Haskell, and by economic pressure on the professionals who had the retail concessions. As well try to stop the Mississippi when that crusty old offshoot of Neptune decides to see the adjacent country. Even the satirical jingle, familiar to red jackets of 1900, failed to discourage "the rascals" who wanted to buy more distance for their money. It ran, if we remember rightly, something like this:

Oh, this is the day they give Haskells away  
With twenty pounds of tea;  
If you see any rascals who want any Haskells  
Just send 'em along to me!

By 1904 the gutty had gone to join the hoop skirt and the high wheeler. Everybody was driving the newfangled rubber cores. American courts granted Haskeil a patent, but Justice Buckley, of England, denied the petition, ruling that the new ball lacked novelty. Perhaps the distinguished jurist really meant that relief wouldn't be granted because a Yankee had happened to think of the rubber core idea first.

There's small room to doubt that the Haskell ball popularized golf in America, and started the trend which has made Scotland's ancient game one for the "four million" as well as the "four hundred."

In the nineties golf was for the exclusive few, a diversion restricted to the blue blooded society in such cloistered spots as Newport, Southampton, Lake Forest, Brookline, and Merion. The advent of the rubber core very literally started "the ball rolling."

For fifteen years golf's growth was slow but sure, then, with Francis Ouimet's dramatic triumph over Rav and Vardon in 1913, the general public became golf conscious. No longer were knickerbockered golfers jeered and mocked at in streets and trains.

No longer was a bag of clubs hailed as presumptive evidence of lunacy. The housewife's black hour had struck. The day of the "golf widow" was at hand.

Without the long-range rubber core it isn't likely that golf would have become a reigning passion with white-collar clerk as well as with business aristocrat. To-day there are nearly four million golfers, of both sexes, in America alone.

Golf has swept aside its patrician boundaries. It is played by the middle class as well as by the socially elect. Youngsters from farms and city slums are caddying instead of playing sand lot baseball. The sons of Italian immigrants grow up to become Sarazens and Turnesas.

If golf continues to make converts at its present rate baseball will be our "national game" only in name. More American capital is invested in golf real estate and equipment to-day than in any other game.

Blame or praise, as you choose, the maligned rabbit ball for golf's incredible vogue. The "feather" and the gutty didn't have within them the germ of such an epidemic. Those staid, sluggish, unresponsive balls would never have captured popular fancy as the rubber core has done.

Killjoys may some day feel called upon to frame a constitutional amendment prohibiting the game that threatens to disrupt family life and revise

business hours. Such a measure would not establish a precedent. As early as 1457 the Scotch Parliament decreed that "ye game of golf be utterly cryt doune and na place of the Realme be usit for sic unprofitable sport."

A test to determine the relative range of the Haskell and the gutty was conducted at Sandy Lodge, England, in 1923. Vardon and Duncan opposed Braid and Taylor. The teams alternated in using the two types of ball, each side playing one round with the rubber core and one with the gutty. Of course the rabbit ball won, Braid averaging fully twenty-five yards more off the tee with the rubber core.

The present rubber core represents a tremendous improvement upon the original Haskell. Modern precision machinery enables ball manufacturers to wind the cores with marvelous accuracy under high tension. Chemical discoveries have yielded improved processes of vulcanizing the rubber strips, imparting a "life" that adds yards to the roll.

A solid pill of tough virgin rubber is incased in a two segment jacket of soft rubber. The two halves of this jacket are sealed together with cement, and upon this three-piece sphere, one inch in circumference, the live rubber strands are mechanically wound.

From the bullet tree, which hides down in Venezuela, a substance called balata is obtained. This gummy stuff is tougher than a top sergeant. Down where it grows canary birds sing bass! What could possibly make a more resisting cover for a golf ball?

The balata is molded into two hollow shells which fit around the core and are compressed into a unit by hydraulic machinery. In this process the mesh or recess pattern is stamped into the cover and baked fast.

These patterns have been reduced to scientific formulas by ballistic experts. It has been found that a recessed ball bores into a head wind more effectively than one that is mesh marked. The



average golfer will get five extra yards by using a recess molded ball on drives into the teeth of a gale.

Conversely, the mesh pattern gives added yardage when driving with the wind. This aerodynamic reaction may be demonstrated to the satisfaction of skeptics by an ingenious driving machine on factory testing grounds.

It takes a full working week to paint a modern golf ball. Four coats are applied, and the drying process is a lengthy one. On the sixth day creation is complete. The innocent little white pill is ready for submission to the not so tender mercies of some socketing, slicing, topping son of a gun from Bonny Briar or Burning Brook.

Did we say "innocent little ball"? Hold on a minute. There are some people—mostly golf architects and golf officials—who judge the modern rabbit ball guilty of more crimes than Jesse James. To their way of thinking it has "ruined the game." You may recognize an old friend in that phrase.

## VI

As this article is written the implementations committee of the U. S. G. A. is formulating plans for a larger and lighter ball, with the idea of curbing the present orgy of slugging, and restoring certain scientific elements of golf strategy which were lost when the gutty became obsolete.

Golf course architects complain that the long range ball has made a mockery of their creations. Courses that once constituted a well-balanced test of shot making, calling for ample use of brassie and midiron, have degenerated into drive and pitch affairs.

Stroke values have been distorted. What was once a back-breaking par five hole has become a mere drive and iron. The rabbit ball has gone Professor Einstein one better and murdered space. Among the crack professionals the brassie and cleek have become as superfluous as the human ap-

pendix. Those once lusty weapons now rust in their owner's leather bags.

Longer courses are the obvious antidote for the long range ball, but this remedy is impractical. Courses have already been stretched to the breaking point. Real estate values have skyrocketed. Golf course acreage near big centers of population is not obtainable at any price. The courses must stay as is, the designers argue, and the ball must be shortened.

That solution sounds just dandy to the architects, but it grates harshly on the average golfer's ears. You who read about the sixties that spring so glibly from the blades of the Joneses, Diegels, Mehlhorns, and Farrells are apt to forget that ninety-nine per cent of the world's golfers have the devil's own time of it to "break 100." This vast army of dubs and near dubs are wretched enough as it is without having their lot made harder by less lively ammunition.

Who is behind the contemplated switch to a lighter and larger golf ball? Not the duffer. He can barely clear the rough off the tee with the so-called "bullet." Talk to him about "distortion of club values" and he'll laugh in your face. He's lucky if he can get home in three strokes on a moderately short par four hole.

Golf fanatics are given to such Baron Munchausen ravings that you may be forgiven for failing to realize that eight out of ten club members have a scoring range from 90 to 120. There are more of 'em over 100 than under it. A less resilient ball might take away what little joy in life their grimly serious recreation has left them.

"A little clique of U. S. G. A. and Royal and Ancient officials threaten to kill the goose that is laying golf's golden eggs," said one of these semiduffers. "We century plants who hover around the one hundred mark represent the average club member. We support the game in America, make possible the network of sumptuous

country clubs, pay the taxes, and give the 'pros' their opportunity to make small fortunes. Yet, simply because a few super stars burn up a course now and then, golf officials want to spoil the game for us by forcing a balloon ball down our throats."

The proposed "balloon ball" will be lighter and larger than the present long range bullet. The larger the ball the more surface it offers to the wind. It follows that the balloon will be less easily controlled in a gale.

It won't bore through a stiff head wind as effectively as the present jack rabbit. It won't roll as far after contact with the turf, since less weight means less momentum.

Agitation for the balloon sphere really began in a serious way at St. Andrews in 1919, when the rules of golf committee passed a resolution recommending that "the power of the ball be limited. Manufacturers are vying with one another to turn out balls of extreme range. Unless we set some definite limit on length they will make a travesty of the game."

Public opinion temporarily postponed any action on the R. and A. resolution. Throughout England and Scotland the reaction among golfers was decidedly hostile. Your Briton has gone in for "slugging" even more exuberantly than his golfing contemporary on this side of the big water hazard. Evidently Americans are not alone in their worship at the shrine of swat.

There exists in England to-day a little coterie of hidebound conservatives who favor restoration of the gutty ball, or, failing that, at least a "floater." They have formed the "Gutty Ball Club," and meet once a week on a London course to play with the vanished gutta percha.

Roger Wethered, former amateur champion of Britain, an enthusiastic gutty club member, conducted a series of tests last year with the jack rabbit and the solid gutty. Using the long-

range bullet, Roger scored a 72. His best card with the gutty on the same course was 76.

Wethered, tall and willowy, is a terrific hitter. Off the tee on ten drives he ranged from 240 to 280 yards with the modern ball. His efforts with the gutty varied from 190 to 240 yards. Wethered's longest gutty drive stopped just about abreast of his shortest shot with the jack rabbit. Bear in mind that Wethered gets extraordinary distance. He is anything but a "typical example."

Two distinct types of stroke are required in hitting these dissimilar balls. The gutty ball has to be swept off the tee with a long, lazy swish of the club. The rubber core, conversely, responds best to a palpable hit, a sharp, punchy blow with a vicious wrist lash at impact.

Clubs of the gutty era were made with limber, whippy shafts. The springier the wood the better. The rubber core ball reacts most effectively when driven by rigid, nonflexible shafted clubs.

## VII

At the National Links in 1924, on the wind-ruffled dunes along Peconic Bay, members of the British and American Walker Cup teams were given a batch of the projected balloon balls to test. Cyril Tolley, renowned as a Homeric clouter, walloped a 274-yard drive with the present jack rabbit. His lustiest effort with the new lighter and larger models netted 262 yards.

"Laddie" Biggs, a typical example of the "sock-it-a-mile" younger generation, hammered out a 294-yarder with the ball now in use, and bit off 280 yards with the balloon.

These tests indicated that the lighter and larger ball is about twelve yards shorter than the current jack rabbit where crack players are concerned. The difference would probably be greater if average club members had

been picked as experimental subjects.

Connoisseurs of golf contend that the present ball has exalted slugging at the expense of science. "Only two strokes are emphasized by the bullet ball," says John Low, staunch defender of the old order, "a drive with a heavy bludgeon, and a steeply lofted approach with a deep-dished spade mashie." He advocates the balloon as a means of reviving the finesse and strategic values of the nineties.

None of the American "pros" whose names adorn the headlines regularly favor any change in the ball. They glory in their "shameless sixties." They take a sadistic delight in tweaking par's whiskers. They agree heartily with the four million dubs that there should be no tampering with the ball.

Your manufacturer of sports equipment also advocates leaving well enough alone. There can't be anything wrong with a game that has swept the country as golf has, he reasons. He is making more money on golf than on all the other games combined, and he dreads a change that will force him to remodel his factory machinery.

Bobby Jones, always receptive to suggestions from golfing headquarters, is about the only American player of note to say a kind word for the proposed balloon ball.

"It won't affect the duffer's game to any extent," Jones argues, "and it will add a savor to championship golf that has gradually seeped out. On some of the shorter courses I play whole rounds without unsheathing my brassie. Every golfer knows that a full-blooded brassie shot to the distant green brings a thrill that isn't soon forgotten. The present ball has taken much of the kick out of golf for the expert player. The game has become a cut and dried proposition of driving, pitching, and putting."

The apostles of things as they are counter with: "Jones is the most skillful shot maker living. The balloon

ball will put a premium on skill; ergo, Jones will monopolize future championships."

"You're dead wrong there," retorts Finlay Douglas. "The larger and lighter ball will hurt rather than help Jones's game. Bobby's one weakness is a tendency to pull medium length pitches off line. The balloon ball will exaggerate that tendency."

Whether or not the less lively ball will help or hinder Bobby Jones is of merely academic interest to golf's great majority. "Are we to be robbed of the ball that has made it possible for us to enjoy the game merely because a few supermen can sometimes make a course look silly?" demands the amalgamated order of duffers. "Not if we know our divots!"

Even in republics majorities seldom have their way. The handwriting in the bunker sands indicates that four million innocents must suffer for the scoring sins of the forty stroke thieves.

If the golf solons reduce the driving range they will have reversed baseball precedent. Prior to 1915 a comparatively dead ball made our national game a scientific exposition of place hitting, drag bunting, base stealing, and other varieties of "inside stuff." Since the introduction of the rabbit sphere in baseball the game has been transformed into a home run hip-podrome with Ruth in the rôle of Jumbo.

Golf's ringmasters would adopt opposite tactics. They would stay the march of evolution toward greater distance, and right about face in the direction of more finesse. For the golfer's motto, "Far and sure," which John Patersone, cobbler partner of King James II, inscribed above the door of his Edinburgh house, they would substitute the slogan, "Not so far and not so sure."

Well, fellow duffers, what does it matter? You and I will continue to hear some raucous-voiced professional bellow: "Keep your eye on the ball!"

# The Parrogens



The old feathered reprobate merely looked wise

## *The strange story of an ornithological wonder of wartime*

By Captain S. P. Meek, United States Army



HIGH-PITCHED whistle keened through the air, and the signal corporal in charge of the army pigeon cote hastened to open the door of the return cage. The note of the whistle drew nearer, and a beautiful carrier pigeon dropped down from the sky and came to rest on the porch of the cote. He preened his wings for a minute, cast an amorous glance at the hens in a near-by inclosure, and strutted through the doorway. The wicket fell behind him.

The corporal reached into the cage and took out the bird. He carefully detached the tiny capsule from the pigeon's leg, and stamped the time on it with an automatic time recorder.

"Pretty good!" he remarked exultantly, as he read the message. "He

made it from the Presidio here, on his first flight, in fifty-two minutes, and it's over thirty miles by air line."

"Do you call that speed?" asked the provost sergeant with a glance of contempt. "I could drive it quicker in a tin Lizzie, if there weren't any ferry-boats to slow me down. What's more, when I got here, I wouldn't be carrying any little message of ten words written on tissue paper. I doubt if your pigeon mail will ever displace the air mail that we have operating now."

"That's as it may be," retorted the corporal. "At least he brought the message that was given him, and not some exaggerated garble of it, as you would very likely have done. Also he doesn't spend half his time filling up any one who will listen with a lot of stuff about how wonderful he is; and he doesn't try to sell the captain's cow



to a recruit on his first pay day, like some I could name!"

The provost sergeant thought it wise to change the subject.

"Would you mind informing me why your aerial liner carries a whistle on his tail, instead of a muffler?" he inquired. "If it's intended to wake a signal corporal, it should be changed to a three-inch field gun."

"The whistle is to scare off hawks," replied the corporal.

"To scare off hawks!" repeated the sergeant. "Why don't you teach them to yell 'shoo' at the hawks when they come near? That would scare a hawk lots more than a penny whistle."

"Tell that to the navy," said the corporal. "You can't teach pigeons to talk."

"The deuce you can't!" replied the sergeant. "That, my son, is where you display the appalling ignorance and the stupid prejudice that keep you down to the lowly grade of corporal and prevent you from rising to the lofty eminence of three stripes—a grade of which I am a distinguished ornament. You probably never heard of Signal Sergeant Eversole."

"Eversole?" asked the corporal. "I've seen his name on old orders in the file. He used to have this cote, didn't he?"

"He did," replied the sergeant. "By the same token, he was the first man in charge of it. He started it during the war, and brought it to a high stage of perfection—a condition that has unfortunately ceased with the change in personnel."

"Did he teach pigeons to talk?" asked the corporal.

"He did," said the sergeant. "'Tis an interesting and instructive story, and I wish I had time to tell it. However, my wife has asked me to go to town and get her some meat for supper, and I must be on my way."

"You'll have time to tell me about him first, won't you, sergeant?" coaxed the corporal.

"That I will not," replied the sergeant. "It'll be all I can do to get to town and back before quitting time. Of course, if some one were to offer me some meat—for instance, a nice fat pair of squabs—and save me the trip to town, I might have time to relate that unusual and instructive story."

The corporal wavered between inclination and duty. He knew that unless the sergeant's demands were met, there would be no story forthcoming. Curiosity at last carried the day.

"It just happens that I have a fine fat pair of young squabs that I was intending to take up to Captain Adams to-night," he confessed. "If you are badly in need of them, I might give them to you, if you'll bear me out that the rats got them."

"The rats are very bad here," said the sergeant reflectively. "If you were to leave the heads and feet here when you give them to me, my conscience might allow me to depart for once from the strict letter of the truth, which has always been sacred to me, and to tell Captain Adams that I saw the remains that the rats had left. Where are the squabs?"

The corporal produced the birds, and the sergeant gravely inspected them for size and plumpness. Satisfied at length that they were as good as he could hope for, he seated himself, filled his pipe from the corporal's can, and began his yarn.

## II

"BEFORE the late war we had no pigeons to speak of in the army," the sergeant began. "At that time we had only three signalmen on this post, stationed here to maintain and operate the post telephone system. They were in charge of Signal Sergeant Eversole, who lived up on the hill in the old barracks area, and had a large barn behind his house. The pay of a sergeant was smaller then than it is now, and Eversole, having four little ones, found it hard to make both ends meet. Look-

ing around for a chance to make a little extra money, he hit on the idea of raising pigeons. He had plenty of barn room, he figured that they would skirmish around and feed themselves, and he could sell all the squabs that he could raise right here on the post.

"The sergeant went to the library in town, borrowed some books on pigeon culture, and began to read up on the subject. The more he read, the better the prospects looked; and so, to make a long story short, he bought a dozen pairs of pigeons and started in. He made a go of it right from the start. He was a bright and industrious chap, and he liked birds. By reading everything about them that he could lay his hands on, and by experimenting with his own birds, in time he became quite an expert on pigeon culture."

"How did he teach them to talk?" asked the corporal.

"That part comes later," replied the sergeant. "Don't interrupt so much. About this time the war came on, and the raising of carrier pigeons for military use suddenly became of great importance. The chief signal officer had the job wished on him, along with the airplanes and the radio and what not. He took a map and a pencil, and said, 'Let there be pigeon cotes here and there,' and pigeon cotes there were.

"Then he looked around for experts to take charge of the cotes, and he found, to his amazement, that he had a pigeon expert right in his own corps—which gave him a fine chance to tell how good his men were. He ordered a large cote established here, with Sergeant Eversole in charge; and to reward him he made him a master signal electrician."

"What is that?" asked the corporal.

"It was the highest and best paid rank in the signal corps in those days, but it was merely a fancy name for those whom the king delighted to honor," replied the sergeant. "However, that's neither here nor there. The point is that Sergeant Eversole was

put in charge of the pigeon cote, with plenty of assistants, lots of the finest carrier pigeons in the country, and a liberal expense account.

"Eversole started in to train these pigeons after the systems he had read of, and a wonderful job he made of it. The system of progressive flights and timing and recording that you are using is the very one that he started years ago. Some of the best carrier pigeons that ever went to France came right from this cote.

"Eversole was fond of other birds as well as pigeons. He had a bunch of canary birds singing around his house all day, but his special pet was John Silver, his parrot. Eversole had caught John in the Panama jungles when he was stationed in the Canal Zone during the construction days, and he had educated the bird wonderfully. John could repeat everything that was said to him, and could swear on his own initiative in eight languages, including Scandinavian, no rights reserved. He used to sit on Eversole's shoulder all day and ride around the post, and the language that he used used to make even the mule skinnners blush. However, that's neither here nor there. The point is that his being in the pigeon cote with Eversole one day led to the great discovery that made the sergeant famous.

"Eversole was taking in some birds that had flown up from Monterey on a test flight. He was reading their messages aloud, and John Silver was repeating them after him. Then the great idea struck Eversole like a flash. He figured that if he could only teach John Silver to make homing flights like the pigeons, he would have something great.

"No sooner would Eversole get an idea than he must try it out, so he sent John Silver out with a corporal for a test flight; but when John was turned loose, all that he would do was to sit there and curse that corporal, and his descendants unto the seventh genera-

tion, in language that would have shocked the ears of a mate of a river steamboat. The corporal got sore and started home, leaving John there, but the wily old bird flew up on top of the automobile and rode back to the post, swearing steadily the whole way."

"A parrot won't fly home like a pigeon," laughed the signal corporal.

"He won't at first, any more than an untrained pigeon will," said the sergeant; "but 'tis no sign that he might not be able to learn. At any rate, that's what Eversole thought, and he tried to teach John. As a first step, he put the parrot in the pigeon cote to stay, figuring that by association with the pigeons he might learn something of what he was wanted to do. Old John was smart enough, and 'tis likely he learned what Eversole wanted soon enough; but he was as lazy as a corporal, and whenever they took him on a test flight all that he would do would be to sit there and swear until he got a chance to bum a ride home. Eversole finally gave it up, and took John back into the house.

"About this time, one of his pigeon hens started to set. Eversole had no objection to this. In fact, he encouraged it, although the mortality of squabs, as shown by his official reports, was enormous. The commissary steward told me that Eversole's meat bills went down a good deal soon after the cote was started, so maybe some of the squabs died violent deaths.

"However, that's neither here nor there. The point is that the hen set, and in due time hatched out two squabs; but such squabs you never saw in your life. They were shaped in the main like a pigeon, but had green bodies and heads, and the darnedest-looking parrot beaks on them that you ever saw in your life. Eversole took one look at them, and then he went into the house, got John Silver, and brought him out to see the queer squabs. The old reprobate looked them over, closed one eye, and said solemnly:

" 'Them as can, does; them as can't, preaches.' "

"This, by the way, was a favorite remark of Eversole's when discussing chaplains.

"At first Eversole was for killing these two freaks, but they were odd, and he liked birds, so he let them grow up. They behaved just like any other young pigeons, and Eversole, in curiosity, sent them out on a test flight. Their mother was a famous homer, and they ran true to her blood and came in in record time. Eversole was tickled pink, and sent them on a longer flight. They made good again, and he planned to send them overseas with his next shipment, chuckling to think what the chief pigeon officer of the Expeditionary Force would say when he saw them. However, they never got overseas."

"Why not?" asked the corporal.

"Because they were too valuable," replied the sergeant, as he refilled his pipe. "Their value was discovered in the nick of time. They were making their last test flight, and Eversole was in the cote here to receive them. When they arrived, the first one in stopped and said very clearly:

" 'What shall we do with these damn freaks—wring their necks?' "

" 'Naw,' said the second one, 'turn them loose. They ain't no worse than the rest of 'em.' "

"Eversole realized that these birds could not only fly home, but could also talk, and that they were repeating the last words they had heard before they were turned loose. He thought it over, and, as a result, he penned John Silver up with three of his best pigeon hens, and left him there until the hens started to set. The experiment was successful as far as appearances went, but one of the half-breed squabs got lost on his first flight, and three others never learned to talk intelligibly. Still, he had four of these parrogens, as he called them, that would come home in as good time as the best carrier pigeons

in the country, and would repeat any message that was given to them. It was kept as a military secret—which meant that no one was told except the Associated Press; and the Secretary of War himself made a special trip out here to see the wonderful birds.

"They made several test flights for him, and he was highly pleased. He promised to recommend Eversole for the Distinguished Service Medal, and transferred him, together with his parrogens and old John Silver, to a cote in Virginia, where the sergeant was instructed to raise them in quantity. Eversole was tickled at the prominence the affair had brought him, and was ready to start in earnest, but the climate of the East didn't agree with John Silver, and he caught pneumonia and died.

"Eversole got other parrots and tried to repeat his experiments, but it didn't work so well. Sometimes the parrots and pigeons wouldn't mate, sometimes the eggs didn't hatch, and sometimes the squabs died. When he did get them raised, usually they were lost on their first flight, or else they wouldn't talk; and after a year he had raised only two more parrogens that would do their stuff.

"Although he failed to produce them in as large quantities as he had hoped, the six that he had were great novelties. He got a medal from the Smithsonian Institute, and every time a foreign mission came over the Secretary of War would take them down to Virginia to see these parrogens perform. It made Eversole quite famous.

"After the war he was retired as a second lieutenant. He went into the pigeon raising business, and was doing well the last I heard of him."

The sergeant rose, carelessly emptied the corporal's tobacco tin into his pouch, picked up his squabs, and started out.

"What became of the six parrogens he raised, sergeant?" asked the corporal. "If he still has them, I should

think he might breed them together and get some more that way."

"He might have done that very thing," replied the sergeant, as he paused in the doorway; "but unfortunately he lost them all on one day."

"What happened to them?" asked the corporal.

"They died of lockjaw," replied the sergeant, again turning toward his home.

"Lockjaw!" cried the corporal. "I never heard of such a thing. A pigeon couldn't die of lockjaw!"

The sergeant paused again.

"They died of lockjaw," he said firmly. "Remember that I told you that every time a foreign mission came over the Secretary of War brought them to see these parrogens? He would let them give the birds a message in their own tongue, and the parrogens always faithfully repeated it. They mastered French, Italian, and Portuguese, and the Secretary thought they could do anything. One day another mission came to town, and he telephoned Eversole to send the birds to Washington. He left a member of the mission to give them a prearranged message, and took the ambassador down to Virginia, to see them come in and to receive the message they brought. The birds came in all right, and one by one they tried to repeat the message; but the best that any of them could do was two words. Every one of them developed lockjaw trying to repeat that message, and they died before a bird doctor could be rushed from Washington."

"What language was the message in?" asked the corporal.

"Russian," said the sergeant, and went his way.

The corporal looked with regret at the empty nest and the empty tobacco can.

"Russian!" was all that he could say. "A pair of squabs and a whole can of tobacco for a yarn like that! Gosh!"



# The Witch



"Ye're droring the copse?"  
she asked in a thin, soft voice

*The strange story of a little old woman who was much more like a witch than she thought she was*

By John Steuart Erskine



WHEN I saw that lane with the copse of beeches behind it, my good intentions flew to the winds. I forgot that I had come to the country to rest a strained hand. I forgot that Nell was expecting me back to lunch at half past one.

I remembered only that I had a sketchbook and paints in my pocket and beauty before my eyes. Under the hedge I found a spot free from nettles, and, sitting down, I set to work.

I cannot have been there long—fifteen minutes, perhaps—when I looked up and saw, limping down the lane toward me, an old woman, small, thin, and bent, with a stick in her right hand and a basket of herbs on her left arm.

Her clothes were old but almost clean, and her gray hair was bare. Her forehead was furrowed with lines, her eyebrows rose together in an expression of surprised sorrow, her hooked nose bent above a toothless mouth to meet a long, pointed chin; but her cheeks were smooth and young, and her gray eyes were very kind.

"What a delightful old witch!" I thought. "I wonder if she would let me paint her!"

As she came abreast of me, our eyes met, and we smiled instinctively, as one does when one meets a kindred spirit. It does not take a lifetime to find out whether a person is likable.

"Ye're droring the copse?" she asked in a thin, soft voice.

I admitted my guilt.

"It's prettiest in bluebell time," she remarked. "There was a 'ouse there when I was a gel. You can see it sometimes in the full moon."

I showed her my sketch, and she murmured kind condolences for its failure to express the scene.

"My cottage is on top of the 'ill," she said, preparing at last to leave me. "If so be ye want anything—"

And she hunched away homeward up the lane.

My hand did not ache that afternoon, so I told Nell that I intended to send to town for my paints and canvas.

"I refuse to allow it," she said severely. "I have invited you down here to rest your poor hand, and to amuse me while Colin goes showing."

Colin is her husband, my cousin, and an enthusiastic breeder of shorthorns. I protested that the world would be the poorer without a picture of the copse, and that my hand had quite ceased to trouble me.

"I will consent only on one condition," Nell said at last. "You may have your canvas if you'll promise to stay another week."

Sometimes I wonder whether Nell is quite as ignorant of my financial state as I should like her to be. She has a way of snaring me into long visits. In any case, I sent for my canvas.

After my first day of painting, when I folded up my things and prepared to return homeward, I decided to go past the cottage on the hill and to cultivate further acquaintance with the witch. If I were going to stay another week, I might have the chance of making some interesting sketches of her. So I climbed through the hedge, left the lanes, and followed the natural track over the naked top of the down.

I rounded a clump of Scotch pines and came in sight of a small flint cottage surrounded by a high, unkempt thorn hedge. At the broken gate I hesitated, for I felt a doubt as to the decency of thrusting my company upon a kind old woman who would prob-

ably be much annoyed if told that she looked like a witch.

The garden was a very strange one. There were the usual flowers—roses, lilies, foxgloves, and hollyhocks, in many stages of bloom and withering, their appearance seeming to be disregarded. Besides these there were wild flowers and herbs whose names I did not know. It was a museum of plants rather than a garden. I noticed the nibbling of rabbits and the narrow paths of rats through the tangle.

Then the old woman herself appeared in the doorway and smiled upon me.

"Is it you, sir?" she greeted me. "Will you come in and rest?"

I lifted aside the gate and entered.

"Can you give me a drink of water?" I asked.

"Come in, sir," she said. "Wouldn't you rather take tea? The kettle's on the fire."

So our friendship was cemented.

## II

THEREAFTER I returned often to the cottage on the hill, and I took to leaving my painting things with the old woman to save myself the trouble of carrying them far.

One day, when I was seated beside her little fire, there came a shout of "Witch, witch!" the rattle of a stone on the old slate roof, and the crash of the falling gate. I suppose it was some farm boy who felt it to be his manly duty to annoy the helpless. I went out and replaced the rotten gate in the gap in the hedge.

The old woman thanked me.

"The boys be always breaking my gate," she said sadly; "and if I let it lie, the cattle come into the garden. I can't afford to feed a dog."

She was silent for a moment, as if brooding.

"You 'eard what the boy shouted?" she asked, looking up again.

I assented uncomfortably.

"You don't think I looks like a

witch, do you, sir?" she begged, her gray eyes pathetic.

What could I do but deny all trace of any such resemblance? Then she smiled a grateful and happy smile, and swept up the ashes of the hearth with revived vigor, her hooky profile outlined against the fire.

Suddenly she turned to me, tears in her eyes.

"I wanted to be a witch once," she said, her voice a little off key. "I could 'a' been. My granny was a witch, and 'er mother, too. She'd 'a' taught me; but when I was young, I didn't see as 'ow it would be any use to me. Gals is always foolish, sir, and I was. Then once—"

Her face seemed to collapse in the utter pathos of a sorrow ever fresh.

"No, I can't tell ye that, sir; but I meant 'im no 'arm. I never really wanted to 'arm nobody. I'm not a witch like my granny was; but sometimes I can 'elp. Would you like me to tell yer luck fer ye, sir?"

Now I do not love fortune telling, for it is apt to hit uncomfortably close to things I do not wish to know; but I thought that she would enjoy it, and that it might be a good excuse for giving her a tip, so I assented.

"Arrange these on the table, sir," she ordered, emptying into my hands a cupful of colored pebbles.

"How?" I asked stupidly.

"Any'ow you like, sir," she said, turning away to the kettle, which was beginning to purr gently.

I made the symbol of life with the stones, and looked up to find her eyes upon me. Her mouth quivered pathetically over her shrunken gums.

"Yer life ain't been easy, sir," she said. "That's funny, because from yer face I should 'a' thought it was; but it's going to be 'arder. You 'aven't got any men fer friends, and, what's more, ye never will 'ave. Only women, lots o' women—I see their faces all round ye; but you won't never come first with no woman, sir. Look out fer

them—particularly for a woman with green eyes and a long mole on the little finger of 'er left 'and. Yer life won't never be the same after she touches it. You want a many things, and you won't get none o' them—only work, and pain along o' that. It's 'urting you now, ain't it, sir?"

Suddenly I realized that my forearm was aching infernally. That was my punishment for not resting it long enough. Now I should not be able to work again for days.

"Put yer arm on the table, sir," she commanded.

I laid it there, wondering how she knew that it was my arm that pained me. She stooped, she picked up a large black toad from the floor, and placed it upon my wrist. I watched curiously. The toad began to sidle and swell, and the ache in my wrist ran out like water from a leaky bucket. She took the toad in her hand, carried him to the door, and laid him on a leaf.

"'Ave you ever 'urt any one, sir?" she asked, pouring tea into my mug. "I was very foolish when I was young. We lived alone 'ere, you see, me and my father and my granny, who was a witch; and people didn't come near us, because of granny, unless they was in trouble and wanted 'elp. The village ain't very near. I was young, and wanted to be coorted like any other gel, but the men was afraid of me because of granny, who was a witch. Then one day, when I went to the village shop, I saw 'Ubert Dowson, who was plowman on the next farm. 'E was big and strong—bigger than you, sir—and 'e 'ad brown eyes and a 'igh-colored face. 'E looked at me, and I looked at 'im once, and then I couldn't look at 'im again; but on 'Allowe'en, when I combed my 'air in front of the glass, I saw 'is face over my shoulder, and I knew I loved 'im.

"But 'e didn't come near me, so I went to granny and I says:

"'Granny,' I says, 'I wants a love charm.'

"She was very old, because she was my father's granny, and she sat over the fire all day. She didn't so much as look at me.

"'No,' she says, 'it ain't good to give children power. Ye're too young,' she says.

"But I kept on at 'er; and at last she says:

"'I can give ye a yerb, and if ye mix it with 'is drink and stay while 'e drinks it, 'e'll go mad fer ye,' she says. 'and die if 'e can't 'ave ye.'

"I begged 'er to tell me the yerb, but she wouldn't; only she says:

"'I can tell ye a charm to make 'im follow ye like a dog. It 'll take away 'is courage an' 'is pride and everything only love.'

"So I wanted to know that, too; and because she was very old, she got tired and told me, whispering because she was afraid of my father. I felt sick at what she told me, and I couldn't do it; so I begged until she told me the yerb.

"Next month, when 'Ubert was plowing in the field below the little copse, I went to 'im with a jug of tea, and I mixed the dust of the yerb in with it. 'Ubert 'e thanks me, and drinks it down without noticing. Then we talked under the 'azel 'edge, and 'e made love to me, like 'e would 'a' done with any gel, because 'e was a lad with the women; but I watched 'im, and I saw 'is eyes fix on me, and I knew I 'ad 'im. 'Is 'ands begun to shake, and 'is voice cracked, and 'is chest 'eaved. 'E put 'is arms round me, and I got terrible frightened, 'e was so strong. Then 'e kissed me, and I knew I belonged to 'im, not 'im to me."

The old woman's face was joyous, as if she were remembering the happiest moments of her life.

"So 'Ubert come coorting me," she went on. "Ah, 'e was a man! But 'e wanted to take everything and give nothing—like a man. At first I didn't care. I loved 'im too much. Then I 'eard tales about 'im from the village, that 'e was coorting another gel there.

I didn't believe it until 'e stopped coming to see me. Then I went to look fer 'im, and I told 'im to 'is face what I'd 'eard, and 'e laughed at me. I told 'im to take care, because I could put a spell on 'im, like I did before; but 'e said I was no good as a witch, because my charm 'ad only give me to 'im, and 'e 'adn't lost nothing.

"I was angry. I went 'ome to my granny, who was settin' all alone by the fire, and I says:

"'Granny,' I says, 'I wants a charm to change a man into an animal,' I says. 'That's what 'e deserves to be—an animal,' I says.

"'You're too young,' says Granny. 'Young people acts too 'asty,' she says.

"But I begged until I wore 'er down, 'er being old and easy tired, and she told me. So I took a piece of 'are-skin and the 'andkerchief 'Ubert 'ad worn on 'is neck, and I cursed 'im in the un'oly name. I cursed the soul out of 'is body, and burned the 'andkerchief in the fire, and baptized the 'are-skin with 'is name. That was all, but I knew nobody wouldn't see 'Ubert no more, and 'e would come to me as an 'are, knowing only I could free 'im. My granny's charms never failed.

"Then my anger cooled down, and I began to think of 'Ubert. I knew 'e loved me, and me only. I didn't need no sorcery to bring 'im back. 'E'd 'a' come without; but now I couldn't never know, because 'e'd 'ave to come. I couldn't change 'im back into a man unless 'e come; so I 'ad to wait, never knowing if 'e really loved me.

"Then my father walked into the cottage, and 'e carried a dead 'are in 'is 'and.

"'As I came through the wood,' 'e says, 'this 'are come 'opping right up to the gate, and when 'e seen me 'e dodged straight into my springe, and I killed 'im. Skin 'im, gel.'

"'E tossed the 'are into my lap; but I wept, because I knew this was 'Ubert, who had been coming to me without any bewitching, and now 'e was dead.



"Give me a charm to bring the dead to life," I begs my granny.

"She said there wasn't no such charm; so I took 'Ubert out and buried 'im in the garden. My father was very angry, 'im thinking 'Ubert was only an 'are."

The old woman wept a little in memory of her grief, but I could see that it had long since ceased to pain her.

"I didn't want to 'urt 'im," she repeated pathetically; "but 'e was dead, and the village never knew what 'ad 'appened to 'im. 'E just never come back."

I offered stammering words of consolation—stupid, inadequate words that only expressed pity. I rose from the table.

"I must rest my arm to-morrow," I said; "but I shall come back the day after."

She smiled mistily.

"Thank ye, sir," she said. "You aren't going to worry about what I told ye about yerself, sir? I don't always see true."

### III

I HAD to pass through the village to reach the house, and on the road I caught up with Nell, who had been

visiting an old couple, pensioned off by Colin's father.

"Charming old witch lives up on that hill," I remarked. "She's been telling my fortune."

Nell laughed cheerfully.

"I can do that," she said. "You're going to marry a rich heiress, and be quite, quite happy, and strike out a new school of painting."

"That's not what she said," I replied.

Nell shook her head.

"I know," she mused. "It wouldn't be. Gloomy old dear! I had her tell mine once. No more! Now I go to a cheerful witch in town, who tells me only nice things. Poor soul! She hasn't had too magnificent a life herself. Everybody's afraid of her because she's a witch; and Colin's father told me that she got quite cranky years ago, when her young man went away to America and never came back. Heigh-ho! How's the arm, laddy?"

She clutched my right wrist with her left hand and looked up at me, wise-eyed. Nell has very pretty eyes—large and gray, with a slight stain of yellow-brown that makes them look almost green at times. I looked down at the hand that gripped mine, and I saw on the little finger a long mole.



### RETURN

ALL the streets were singing  
In Oxford town to-day,  
For you had come again, and brought  
The miracle of May;  
And every hedgerow smiled at you,  
While jonquils danced, as jonquils do.

All the chimes were singing  
In Oxford town to-night,  
As by the river where we met  
The hawthorn glimmered white.  
And in our well remembered wood  
The bluebells rang, as bluebells should!

*Ruth Forbes Eliot*

# Slim, B.D.S.



He saw the girl, but did not sense the spear behind him

*Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it*

By L. Patrick Greene



TWENTY years ago he had come to Africa possessed of an honorable name, a splendid physique, and a small capital with which he hoped to win wealth and fame. Within five years his ambitions had waned, his health had failed, and his morale had vanished, together with his money, into the limbo of forgotten things.

For twenty years he had been in Africa. For fifteen of those years he had been a wanderer, an outcast, known only as Slim. He had roved from the Cape to Broken Hills, from Mozambique to Walfisch Bay, always deluding himself with the idea that he was seeking wealth and endeavoring

to live up to the ambitions with which he had come out to Africa.

Whenever two paths presented themselves before him, he had always and unhesitatingly chosen the easier; and so he had gradually lost himself, had become embogged in a pit of moral slime. The easiest way invariably leads downhill rapidly, or ends in a *cul-de-sac*.

He was bankrupt of everything now. His health was gone; he had no money, no name, nothing. He had lost everything that makes it possible for a white man to live and thrive in black man's Africa.

At sundown he came to a native kraal just beyond the Rhodesian border. He was returning to the home

colony after a fruitless period of wandering in Portuguese territory, where he had prospected for gold, or rubber, or anything that promised well. Of course, he had found nothing. He desired death above all things, but it was easier to beg for food from natives, although by doing so he debased himself before them.

Now, after he had croaked a dubious song and danced a few shuffling steps for the edification of the people of the kraal, he accepted with fervent protestations of thanks their offerings of food and native beer. Later, when his hunger was satisfied, he sat with the headman and the old men of the kraal around their fire, before retiring to the vermin-ridden hut they had grudgingly allotted him.

For a while the natives ignored him. Then Mali, the headman, asked abruptly:

"And where do you go on the morrow, white man?"

He answered glibly enough, knowing the country well.

"I cross the border and go to the police camp at Shimwa," he said.

The headman laughed harshly, and his eyes glowed with savage anger.

"You'll get little or no help there, white man," he warned. "The policeman is a hard man. *Wo-we*, he took my son—my only son—and made him a prisoner. Yet my son had done no harm. He had only crossed the border and killed a man who had insulted him. There is no harm in that."

"No harm, truly, in your eyes," replied Slim; "but in the eyes of white men it is a great crime. 'A life for a life,' their law declares."

The headman's eyes blazed.

"Say you so?" he stormed. "Then that shall be my law—a life for a life. I will yet make that policeman pay for the evil he has done me! He has a daughter!"

Mali abruptly rose to his feet, and stalked away to his hut.

For a little while the white man sat

with the others. Then they, too, departed to their huts, leaving him staring morosely before him.

## II

It was nearly noon when Slim came to the post of the British South African Police at Shimwa. He was challenged by a stalwart native policeman, who grinned at him with an impudent familiarity. Slim swore at the man in English, and then added in the vernacular:

"I want to see the sergeant."

The native jerked his thumb toward the largest of the well built huts that formed the post.

Slim shuffled slowly toward it, making no attempt to hide his filth or disguise his degraded appearance. In that place of orderliness, of neat cabins surrounded by whitewashed stones, he seemed an alien thing.

As he came to the hut, a man dressed in white flannels appeared at the door and looked at the wanderer with deep contempt.

"What do you want?" he asked harshly, one hand in his pocket and the other twisting the waxed ends of his iron-gray mustache.

"That is no way to talk to a white man," Slim began in a whining voice.

"You are not a white man," the sergeant interrupted. "I don't think a washing would make you white. What do you want?"

"I want my rights," Slim began malevolently, but ended weakly: "I am looking for relief."

The sergeant nodded understandingly.

"You would be," he said. "I know your sort. Any proof you are a British subject?"

Slim shook his head.

"You don't expect me to carry my birth certificate around with me, sergeant? It ain't necessary, anyway. If I come to you claiming I'm a British subject, and asking for relief, you've got to give it to me, unless you can

prove I'm not a British subject—and you can't."

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders and led the way to the store hut. Without further words he busied himself measuring out "Ration B"—the ration which the Rhodesian government authorizes the police to issue to any B. D. S., or British destitute subject who applies for aid.

"I say, sergeant," Slim said suddenly, "that nigger over the border has it in for you, and no mistake."

The sergeant made no reply. He was at the moment engaged in weighing out a quantity of flour. He was alive to the wiles of the B. D. S. He knew that some of these wanderers got information from the natives that other men could not obtain, and that they were always willing to pass it on to the police, in the hope of influencing them to be generous in measuring out Ration B; but the sergeant had no intention of being so influenced. He was a methodical man. He gave what the law allowed, and no more.

So not until Ration B was made up did he straighten himself and turn to face Slim, looking at him through the open door of the hut.

"So you've been talking to old Mali, have you?"

Slim nodded.

"Yes—stayed the night there," he replied. "He is mad about the way you treated his son. Says he's going to get even with you."

The sergeant laughed.

"His son committed murder, and he's got to serve a long time for doing it—that's all. If old Mali starts anything, he'll soon find himself traveling along the same road!"

Slim nodded.

"Course I know *you're* not in any danger; but, all the same, you should see that your daughter doesn't roam too far away from the camp without an escort."

"You're right there," the sergeant agreed.

"Course I am," Slim said hurriedly. "I know niggers. Sergeant, can't you add a little bit to the ration? God knows, it ain't enough to keep life in a man!"

"It's all you'll get," the sergeant answered sternly. "It's enough to keep you going till you get to the next police post. Enough or not, it is all you'll get, and it's more than you deserve. A man like you wandering about the country does more harm, and makes it harder for us to keep the niggers under proper control, than anything else. If I had my way, I'd deport you and all like you!"

"It's a hell of a ration," Slim complained. "The niggers treat me better."

"Then why don't you go and live with them?" the sergeant countered hotly.

"Maybe I will," Slim replied. "Maybe I'll get a nigger woman—only they cost money. Could you lend me a fiver, sergeant?"

"Get to hell out of here!" the sergeant thundered.

Slim shuffled a few paces and then came back, grinning.

"Say, sergeant, I'd almost forgotten the ration," he said. "Can't you give me something to put it in?"

The sergeant bent over and put the little store of provisions into a paper sack.

"And how about a billy, sergeant?" Slim continued. "I've got nothing to make my tea in. Can't you spare me a billy and an old blanket—and maybe a waterproof?"

The sergeant hesitated for a moment, and then added to the sack a billy, a thin cotton blanket, and a blue military greatcoat.

"There you are," he said. "If I find you've sold them to the niggers, I'll come after you and flay the hide off you!"

He watched the outcast shuffle slowly away. Then he went into the hut which he used as an office, and, taking



down the day book, made the following entry:

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Issued to B. D. S.....                                       | one (1) Ration B  |
| Taken from the store and debited to sergeant in charge ..... | one (1) billy can |
| Ditto .....  | one (1) blanket   |
| Ditto .....  | one (1) greatcoat |

### III

It was late in the afternoon when Slim came to a fork in the trail. The path to the right, he knew, would bring him very shortly to a trail that led directly eastward to the next police camp; but the one to the left looked pleasanter. It was covered with a green mossy growth that felt like a carpet under his bruised, tired feet; and they turned into it as if by instinct.

After a time he heard the musical, silvery trickle of water. The jungle growth ceased, and he found himself at the edge of a small clearing, through the center of which a crystal stream gurgled, leaping over ledges of rock in miniature waterfalls. Sitting on one of the ledges, playfully dabbling her feet in the water, sat a white girl.

Slim drew back a little into the bush and watched her with eyes that were full of misery. For the first time in many years his visions were clean ones. The girl's refreshing youth and air of careless unsophistication had conjured up for him memories of a long forgotten English spring.

He backed still farther into the bush, intending to return to the proper trail. Suddenly he determined to rise out of the moral slime that embogged him. He determined to start afresh and to make himself worthy of the better things that this girl represented. He boasted to himself that he could do it; and yet he was unhappily conscious that his good resolves would pass with the setting of the sun. He knew himself too well!

He moved cautiously, dreading that a careless move would make the girl conscious of his presence and mar her innocent happiness.

Presently a movement to his right attracted his attention. Noiselessly making his way toward it, he saw before him, crouching under cover, the form of a native. With a burst of intuition he realized that it was Mali the headman, and he knew that deadly peril menaced the girl.

Creeping still nearer, he saw that Mali carried an assagai in his right hand. He saw the native rise stealthily to his feet—saw his right hand draw back ready for a cast—and then Slim sprang forward, and the two men struggled furiously.

The girl jumped up with a cry of fear. Seeing, in one swift glance, only a degraded white man fighting with a native, she thought they were both drunk. She ran to her horse, which was tethered near by, mounted, and rode swiftly back to the police camp.

The sun had set when the sergeant came to the clearing where his daughter had seen the two men fighting. He found there the body of Slim, an assagai sticking through his ribs. Searching the surrounding bush with the keen eyes of a trained hunter, he also found the body of Mali, the headman; and this discovery explained what had happened.

That night he made new entries in his day book, reading:

The aforementioned B. D. S. not using Ration B, the same has been returned to store. One billy can, one blanket, and one greatcoat have also been returned to store, canceling the above indebtedness of sergeant in charge of post.

In order to protect daughter of sergeant in charge of post from murderous attack of Headman Mali, aforementioned B. D. S., name unknown, engaged said headman in combat. Both men were killed. B. D. S. has been buried just outside police camp. His grave has been marked by white stones and a wooden board on which is carved:

"Here lies a white man."

And then the book was carefully blotted and put away. The sergeant was a methodical man, and just, according to his lights.



# Let's Talk It Over!

*A public conference in which the editor repeats what the readers say. All are invited to hurl a brickbat or toss a bouquet*



**I**N this family circle of readers, the editor would like to ask a few questions. Do you read a story chiefly because of (1) the author's reputation; (2) the magazine's reputation; (3) the title of the story, or (4) the illustrations?

What types of stories do you prefer? And who are your favorite MUNSEY authors? This last question was suggested by a friend in Utah, who writes:

Ogden, Utah.

Why not conduct a balloting among your readers to find out what authors they like best among those who contribute to MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE?

In my opinion, the "big three" are Bob Davis for human interest, George Trevor for sports, and E. K. Means for negro humor. Also, I find keen enjoyment in the penetrating mind of John Steuart Erskine, and I relish an occasional trip into the big woods with William Merriam Rouse or Don Cameron Shafer. Recently you ran a fact narrative by Homer Croy; he is a masterful writer, but that thing did not do him justice.

I am immensely pleased with the kaleidoscopic procession of modernistic jackets which have been adorning MUNSEY'S in the last few months, particularly April. Keep up the good work!

M. L. B.

Chicago, Ill.

I am inclosing money order for subscription to MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE. I have been reading MUNSEY'S for several years and like it better with each issue.

I don't mind a two-part story; in fact, I rather like one now and then; but my personal

preference is not for longer serials nor for special articles. Don't ever leave out E. K. Means. His stories are unique. I like "Bob Davis Recalls" very well, too. We all have our faults and no magazine can suit all tastes in every particular. But whatever your faults, we must still love you the same, or we wouldn't continue to subscribe for you. E. M. H.

P. S.—If this gets into "Let's Talk It Over," may I have the original of the heading on page 130 of the February issue? Second choice, page 146. Thank you.

The above postscript refers to our announcement made some months ago, that the publication of a letter in this department entitles the writer of it to an original pen-and-ink drawing of a recent MUNSEY illustration, upon request. These drawings are on heavy artboard, ten by fifteen inches or fifteen by twenty. The letter-writer should state both first and second choices of illustration desired.

Parkside, Coventry, England.

Another point of view! MUNSEY'S is the only magazine I read consistently, for, in my opinion, there is not an English periodical with which to compare it. I have obtained copies regularly for at least twelve years—except, of course, during the war period, and then for obvious reasons.

It is very rarely that one finds a MUNSEY story not worth reading. The general layout is good, and I am glad you have discontinued the full pages of comics.

Give us more of E. K. Means! The Big Four are alive and lovable—real personalities and a delight.

George Trevor's articles are classics and are worth reading again and again. I am anxiously awaiting my April number to read him once more. And to think that before I approached the Hinkey football article—the first Trevor yarn I read—I was strongly prejudiced against it.

MUNSEY is worth the best possible cover; I should hate to be without it. P. E. S.

Hill City, S. D.

In perusing your magazine last night for the first time I chanced upon the "Let's Talk It Over" pages, a most interesting department. I have no brickbats to hurl, for I am delighted with your short stories; they are real enjoyable reading matter.

Love, humor and historical subjects interest me most. Your poetry also is good. As to the covers: occasionally an alluring cover prompts me to purchase a magazine that I have never known before, but once I find that the book is worth reading I do not concern myself with covers, I ask for the magazine by name.

E. C. O.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Just a greeting from an almost stranger! It is but recently that I have been reacquainting myself with you.

During the Spanish-American War, when I was a boy, MUNSEY's was my magazine, and I awaited eagerly the coming of each new copy. I thought even then that it was the greatest periodical going. And it was, too. There was none other to touch it at any price. Its fiction and fitting illustrations, together with the special departments, placed it in a niche of its own.

When the remodeled MUNSEY first came out, I had not read the magazine for a long period. Well, if it is no longer "the same old girl," still the new one is good at that. Considering it as largely a fictional proposition, it is gratifying to see that the stories are really interesting and virile—neither slushy nor sordid, as in some other publications. Best wishes to my "new girl"! C. S.

Altha, Fla.

I enjoy MUNSEY very much. I have just finished reading "Tiger Love"; it was a fine story. I am very fond of "Bob Davis Recalls."

Miss M. S. P.

The MUNSEY editorial council is a coöperative affair—everybody is invited to sit in on it, via correspondence. Even if you live in far-away Australia or New Zealand, as these two readers do:

Christchurch, New Zealand

I wish to add my tribute to what others have written about MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE. I read each month's issue and find it fascinat-

ing. "Tiger Love" is the style of story I appreciate. I thought your special articles in the December number were particularly fine. Articles such as "Is There a Santa Claus?" should never be crowded out by fiction. I prefer beautiful feminine heads for magazine covers, but I like your type of story illustrations. J. D.

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

I have been a constant reader of MUNSEY's for years, and I would like you to know that I think the present publication is infinitely superior to past editions.

Except for a very few other American magazines, MUNSEY's stands alone for solid clean yarns, which appeal to Australian youth, for of all other people under the sun, the Australians are most like the Americans. And that is why MUNSEY's is popular here. Best wishes from an Australian girl. L. B.

Moscow, Center, U. S. S. R.

As an ardent reader of MUNSEY—Glasgow, Scotland, 1910-1917 and periodically since the end of 1917 when I came to Russia—I suggest that the new Russian literature has already to its credit some exceptionally fine reading matter. I am sure Russian stories would be of enormous interest to your readers.

L. S.

We do not print translations.

## READER'S BALLOT

Ballot Editor,  
MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE,  
280 Broadway, New York City.

The stories I like best in your  
May issue are:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

I do not like.....

because.....

Name.....

Street.....

City..... State.....

# Looking Thru Munsey's

FOR JUNE

## THE GREATEST PRIZE FIGHTER OF ALL TIME

By GEORGE TREVOR

An expert's honest opinion, choosing the master pugilist at his peak.

## HOW TO WIN SUCCESS

By GENE TUNNEY

MAX BRAND'S

## "BLOOD AND IRON"

Second installment of a fast moving romance of the golden West.

A high authority speaks on the deadly menace of the  
youthful gangster

By GROVER A. WHALEN, Police Commissioner of  
N. Y. City, as told to EDWIN C. HILL

"Who's the Scream in Your Talkie?"

ISABEL JOHNSTON

warns us all against the oncoming changes in the movie world.

*The June number contains a particularly fine quota of short stories, including*

RAFAEL SABATINI AND A. HAMILTON GIBBS

# JUNE MUNSEY

On Sale at All News-stands, Saturday, May 18th



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or Useful**

If you ever acted quickly on a wonderful value, act now! Picture in your mind how this new-type Bridge Smoker will beautify your living room. It's a handsome piece of furniture and an improved smoking stand combined! Read below how the makers are able to set an almost incredibly low price on it!



THINK a minute. You've seen smoking stands galore—but have you ever seen one like this Mandarin Bridge Smoker? An ash tray is just an ash tray—with the slightest gust of wind blowing the ashes on your rug. An ash stand with the skinny ugly stem is little better. Many women have bought them as a necessary evil, hoping that some day they'd find a really beautiful smoking stand. And now comes Mandarin Bridge Smoker! Based on the age-old artistry of the Grecian urn yet modern as a Paris gown! Beautifully finished to suit any taste and harmonize with any room. Mahogany finish for those who prefer a neutral shade. Chinese Red or Jade Green for rooms which need a touch of bright color. Rugged metal construction throughout, machine spun and moulded by expert craftsmen. A gentle twist opens or closes the slots so ashes can't fly. Removable lid and hollow body for depositing papers, apple cores, etc. Unique vacuum principle stifles all odor from stale tobacco or refuse. Weighs little. Has non-tilting loaded base. Size 24 inches high, 23 inches around. Non-fading finish, rebrightened with a brush of your dusting cloth. Fully guaranteed by the makers of a nationally advertised line!

**30 DAYS' FREE TRIAL!**

Mandarin Bridge Smokers are offered by the makers at a challenge price to keep their factory busy until Fall when their main business begins. You be the judge of its amazing value. At our risk, put it in your home for 30 days—while your friends admire it—while you search thru any mail order catalog or retail store for a smoker that even approaches it. If not more than delighted, your money is refunded—in full—without question. But don't try to judge its looks by these miniature reproductions. Send coupon below for beautifully illustrated catalog showing them in large size—giving more complete description—telling how you can even own one FREE of COST! SEND NO MONEY. Simply mail coupon. This offer may never be made again. Mandarin Sales Corp., Lock Box 524, Dept. E-22, Muncie, Ind., U.S.A.

**CATALOG FREE!**

Mandarin Sales Corp., Lock Box 524, Dept. E-22, Muncie, Ind., U.S.A.

Without obligating me, send free catalog of Mandarin Bridge Smokers.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

☐ Check here for agents' money-making proposition.

Chinese  
Red



Jade  
Green



Mahog-  
any



**AGENTS!**

**One Look Sells It!**

We offer men and women a sure-fire \$10 to \$20 a day money-making plan to represent our factory. No selling talk, no demonstration necessary—just show this beautiful value and it's sold. Thousands are being sold direct from factory with merely printed illustrations—think how fast you can take orders when women see the actual merchandise. Check bottom line in coupon at left without obligation.

# CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**BIG OHIO CORPORATION WANTS COUNTY MANAGER.** \$50 WEEKLY COMMISSION. EARNINGS START IMMEDIATELY. Good for \$5000 yearly. We furnish everything, deliver and collect. Capital or experience unnecessary. FRY-FYTER CO., 1889 Fyr-Fyter Bldg., Dayton, Ohio.

**WRIGHT'S 3 MINUTE CORN REMEDY. IT'S GUARANTEED.** SEND 25 CENTS AND END THAT CORN. AGENTS MAKE \$25.00—\$100.00 A DAY SELLING OUR REMEDY. Write to H. WRIGHT, 59 Stewart St., Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

**NEW TRENCH COAT SENSATION \$1.98. COMPLETE LINE RAINCOATS INCLUDING ALLIGATORS. LEATHERETTES. GABARDINES. SAMPLE COAT AND 6x9 SWATCH LINE FREE.** AMAZON, 1101 N. ROBEY, CHICAGO.

**AGENTS: GET VANILLA EXTRACT AT ONE CENT A BOTTLE. ALSO NEW BLACK WALNUT FLAVOR. WELCOME FOODS, HARVEY, ILLINOIS.**

**UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY — \$100 WEEKLY SELLING BETTER QUALITY. ALL-WOOL, union-made-to-measure suits and topsuits at \$23.50 and \$31.50. Build big repeat business. Liberal bonus for producers. Large swatch samples FREE.** W. Z. GIBSON, INC., 509 Throop, Dept. D-409, Chicago.

**\$12.00 Daily Showing New Table Cloth. Looks like Linen.** Wash like oilcloth. No Laundering. You just take orders. We deliver and collect. Pay daily. Write at once for Free Sample. BESTEVER, 641 Irving Park Station, Chicago.

**\$15 DAILY — GENUINE DUPONT HEMSTITCHED TABLECLOTHS—LUNCHEON SETS—TABLE RUNNERS.** Wash like Oilcloth—Look like Linen. Six colors. Outfit Free. DOIL-ETTE, 1018 Wabash, Chicago.

**EARN \$90.00 WEEKLY SELLING WORLD'S GREATEST \$23.50 VALUE: ALL WOOL TAILORED-TO-MEASURE SUITS. BIG COMMISSIONS: LIBERAL BONUS. OUTFIT FREE. STYLE-CENTER, DEPT. 3, CINCINNATI.**

**Wonderful "Whisper-It" Mouthpiece For Telephones:** gives secrecy in conversation. Every telephone user a prospect. Retals \$1.00. Liberal profits. Write for full selling proposition. Colytt Laboratories, Dept. M, 565 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

**WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. 150% PROFIT. SOAP'S EXTRACTS, PERFUMES, TOILET GOODS. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. FREE SAMPLE CASE. AUTO FURNISHED: CARNATION CO., 140, ST. LOUIS, MO.**

**SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL AGENTS AND SALESMEN.** Send postcard for amazing book. FREE. Postage prepaid. Contains over 500 best money-making ideas, and rare opportunities. Y. BERNARD, 22 E. 12th St., Cincinnati, O.

**Go Into The Crispette Business (candied popcorn). Make a lot of money. Adapts reports \$364 profits in two days. Alexander \$3000 profits in four months. We start you. Write for facts. LONG EAKINS, 1961 High St., Springfield, Ohio.**

**BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.**

## HELP AND INSTRUCTION

**U. S. Government Jobs. \$1260—\$3400 year. Men—women, 18—50. Steady work. Vacation. Experience usually unnecessary. Full particulars with sample coaching FREE. Write immediately. b—today. FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. R-1, Rochester, N. Y.**

## HELP WANTED—MALE

**FOREST RANGER JOBS PAY \$125—\$200 MONTH AND HOME FURNISHED: PLENTY HUNTING, FISHING, TRAPPING. FOR DETAILS, WRITE NORTON INSTITUTE, 1497 TEMPLE COURT, DENVER, COLO.**

**FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN (WHITE OR COLORED). SLEEPING CAR, TRAIN PORTERS (COLORED). \$150—\$250 MONTHLY. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. 836 RAILWAY BUREAU, EAST ST. LOUIS, ILL.**

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**WOMEN MAKE \$9 DAILY WEARING AND SHOWING NEW INVENTION.** Prevents shoulder straps slipping. Real comfort at last! For Particulars—Free Offer, write LINGERIE "V" CO., 16 Lake, North Windham, Conn.

**WOMEN—Spare time, showing wonderful sanitary Belt and Protector. Something new. Cannot be bought in stores. Strictly guaranteed. \$25.00 week. We teach you. Experience unnecessary. EASETEX, 68-G West Austin, Chicago.**

## CAMERA AND PHOTO SUPPLIES

**MAKE MONEY IN PHOTOGRAPHY. LEARN QUICKLY AT HOME. SPARE OR FULL TIME. NEW PLAN. Nothing like it. Experience unnecessary. AMERICAN SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY, Dept. 1451, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago.**

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**AGENTS WANTED—ON A FAST SELLING 25C ITEM FOR THE KITCHEN. COSTS YOU 8 1-3C. SAMPLE FREE. SEND 2C STAMP TO COVER POSTAGE. M. SEED FILTER MFG. CO., INC., 353 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.**

**FEDERAL DISTRIBUTORS GET BIG PAY! NO CAPITAL OR EXPERIENCE NEEDED. TERRITORY BEING ASSIGNED. WRITE FOR APPLICATION BLANK. FEDERAL PURE FOOD CO., M-2311, ARCHER, CHICAGO.**

**A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN—MAKING SPARKLING GLASS NAME AND NUMBER PLATES, CHECKERBOARDS, SIGNS. BIG BOOK AND SAMPLE FREE. E. PALMER, 536 WOOSTER, OHIO.**

**STRANGE BATTERY COMPOUND CHARGES BATTERIES INSTANTLY. GIVES NEW LIFE AND PREVENTS OVERCHARGE. BIG PROFITS. LIGHTNING CO., ST. PAUL, MINN.**

**BIG PAY EVERY DAY** taking orders for Dress Shirts, Work Shirts, Pants, Overalls, Sweaters, Underwear, Hosiery, Pajamas, Play suits! Experience unnecessary. Outfit FREE! NIMROD CO., Dept. 55, 4922-28 Lincoln Ave., Chicago.

**\$2.95 AUTOSEAT COVERS—CASH ONLY—AMAZING ALL AMERICA—POSTCARD BRINGS LEATHERETTE SALES OUTFIT. "QUALITY." X513 SO. DEARBORN, CHICAGO.**

**AGENTS—ABSOLUTELY NEW! OUR HAND COLORED Popular Photo Statuettes Going Big! Everyone wants them! Agents making \$10—\$25 daily! Samples furnished! CRUVER MFG. CO., G2456 Jackson, Chicago.**

**BIGGEST PROFITS EVER OFFERED on quick selling, sure repeating toilet goods, food products and remedies. 200 items each needed daily in every home. Get FREE SAMPLE CASE OFFER. HO-RO-CO MFG. CO., Dept. 2704, St. Louis, Mo.**

**\$16 DAILY SELLING NEW TABLECLOTH. WASHES LIKE OILCLOTH. NO LAUNDERING. FREE SAMPLE OUTFIT. JONES, 802 N. CLARK, CHICAGO.**

**WELLS CLEARED \$620.00 IN ONE MONTH with Amazing Book "Business Guide" and free legal service. Outfit free! PROF. NICHOLS, Dept. 108, Naperville, Ill.**

**FREE—1000 MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES FROM RELIABLE FIRMS. SAMPLE COPY FREE. SPECIALTY SALESMAN MAGAZINE, 4229 MATHER TOWER, CHICAGO.**

**MAKE \$65 AND MORE EVERY WEEK DISTRIBUTING our new, pure quality HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS. We train you to increase earnings. Attractive Premium Deals. Protected Territory. Dignified, growing repeat business. 150-200% Profit. Dept. A-3, MIDWEST DRUG CO., COLUMBUS, OHIO.**

**\$25 DAILY. RAINCOATS ALL COLORS \$2.45. TRENCHCOATS, ALLIGATORS. LEATHERETTES. FREE COAT AND OUTFIT. BRADLEY, Dept. AA-5, 230 So. Wells, Chicago.**

**MAKE YOUR OWN PRODUCTS. EMPLOY AGENTS YOURSELF. TOILET ARTICLES, SOAP, EXTRACTS. We furnish everything. Valuable book FREE. NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC LABORATORIES, 1961W Broad, Richmond, Va.**

## AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

**STORY WRITERS, POETS, SONG WRITERS: EARN BIG MONEY FOR YOUR SHORT STORIES, POEMS, SONGS AND OTHER ACCEPTED EFFORTS: "Writing For Profit" is my secret AND IT'S YOURS FREE; SEND FOR IT TODAY. RICHARD Y. ABBOTT, 22 E. 12th St., Cincinnati, O.**

**SONG POEM OR MELODY WRITERS—GET IN TOUCH WITH ME IMMEDIATELY FOR A BONA FIDE PROPOSITION. DROP A POSTAL CARD NOW TO RAY HIBBELE, D-3, 2104 N. KEYSTONE AVE., CHICAGO.**

## MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

**MONEY MADE IN MICHIGAN POTATOES. \$10 DOWN NOW AND EASY TERMS BUYS LAND NEAR MARKETS, Lakes, Streams. Write today. SWIGART & CO., M-1276, First National Bank Building, Chicago.**

## MISCELLANEOUS

**CASH FOR OLD GOLD, SILVER, PLATINUM JEWELRY. DENTAL WORK. WRITE FOR INFORMATION TO-DAY! B. POLACER, 2408 SO. CICERO AVE., CICERO, ILL.**

## HOW TO ENTERTAIN

**Plays, musical comedies and revues, minstrels, comedy and talking songs, blackface skits, vaudeville acts, monologs, dialogues, recitations, entertainments, musical readings, make-up goods. Catalog free. T. S. Denison & Co., 623 So. Wabash, Dept. 43, Chicago.**

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

Sent for Only  
**\$1.00**  
deposit

**Cool  
Comfort  
for  
Summer  
Wear**

On this  
Sale only  
**\$12.95**

## Stylish Serviceable Tropical Cool Cloth

Only \$1.00 deposit brings this most extraordinary value in men's two piece hot weather suits. Think of it—only \$12.95! Suit is made from the famous Egyptian Cool Cloth, a special worsted noted for its wearing qualities, neat appearance, fine texture and cool comfort. Comes in a snappy two-button style. Coat has three outside patch pockets and is unlined. Yoke and seams are all piped with lustrous satine. Trousers are of medium fullness, finished off with cuff bottoms, two side and hip pockets and belt loops. Both coat and trousers excellently tailored are perfect fitting and hanging. A sensible suit for hot weather, a snappy suit that will give service. Comes in neat striped patterns of tan or gray.

Order by No. A-7230 S. Terms \$1.00 with coupon, then only \$2.00 a month. Total bargain price \$12.95.

## 6 Months to Pay

You not only save money on this exceptional value but you may also pay the balance on easy terms. Yes, only \$2.00 a month—an amount so small you'll never miss the money. Well-dressed men everywhere find this plan the most convenient. Send only \$1.00 now. No risk to you (see coupon). No C. O. D. to pay. Get this suit on approval, then if satisfied, take 6 months to pay. Send Coupon and only \$1.00 now.

**ELMER RICHARDS CO.**

Established over 20 years

Dept. 2835 West 35th Street, Chicago

I enclose \$1 deposit. Send Tropical Cool Cloth Suit No. A-7230 S.  
If I am not perfectly satisfied I can return it and get my money back.  
If I keep it I will pay \$2.00 a month until I have paid \$12.95 in all.

Height.....Weight.....Chest.....

Waist.....Inseam.....

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

(Be sure to fill out simple measurements above thus insuring perfect fit.)



Sent  
on  
Approval



No  
Risk



No  
C.O.D.  
to  
Pay!



Send  
Coupon  
and \$1.00  
Now!



# \$1.00 Starts You In Successful Business



## The Best Drink You Ever Tasted

Just add cold water and sugar to the powder—a delicious, cooling, healthful drink is ready in a jiffy—simple, easy—can be kept on ice for a week or more. You will be surprised and delighted how fast and easy they sell.

### Think of It! 25 Big Glasses 25c

Everyone buys—repeat orders CERTAIN. Buyers are sure to come back for more and more—they treat their friends, then they buy too, etc. Many buy several packages at a time—sales are easy and your profits are large. You can also hire agents to sell house to house. Stores will be glad to buy from you—they cannot buy elsewhere. Send us one dollar and we will send you a full starting outfit (makes 150 glasses) with circulars, order book and license all postpaid, also a credit check good for this dollar on your future order. Territory is being given NOW—it is VERY valuable! Order your outfit To-Day.



CAPITOL PRODUCTS CO.,  
4419-21 Madison St. Chicago, Ill.

**Be Your Own Boss**  
**MAKE BIG MONEY**  
**Enjoy The Pleasures of Life**

# \$100 WEEK

**SELLING CHILDREN'S CLOTHING** — Biggest Company - Largest Line  
NECKWEAR & UNDERWEAR **SAMPLE OUTFIT FREE**  
EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY  
Million Dollar Stock Back of Your Samples. **WRITE**  
CARLTON HILLS, INC. DEPT. 114 Fifth Ave., New York 99-N

## Eight Instruments in One—that's the OCTOFONE

If you play the "uke", tenor guitar, tenor banjo, mandolin, mandola, mando-cello, tiple or taropatch—then you can play the OCTOFONE. It tunes and plays like any one of these instruments, but has a wonderful, mellow tone of its own. The OCTOFONE is great for solo or ensemble playing and for voice accompaniment. Adds new tone qualities to any dance orchestra.

Easy for Beginners—Free Instruction Book shows you.



**OCTOFONE**  
**FREE INSTRUCTION BOOK!**

**\$15.00**

No obligation. Mail coupon to:  
Royal Musical Instrument Co.  
3211 W Grand Ave., Dept. 1181E, Chicago



**\$158 to \$225**

**MONTH**  
**Men-Boys** 18 or over

See Your Country  
Mail Coupon Today Sure  
Many Gov't Jobs  
Open to Women

**COUPON**  
Rush to me free information telling how I can get a U. S. Government Big Pay Job. Send list of jobs now obtainable.  
Name.....  
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FRANKLIN INSTITUTE  
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# TYPEWRITERS

**ALL STANDARD**  
**10 Days FREE Trial**  
**at 1/2 PRICE**  
Underwood, Remington, Royal, etc.  
All late models, completely refinished brand new. **GUARANTEED** for ten years. Send no money—big free catalog shows actual machines in full colors. Get our direct-to-you easy payment plan and 10 days' trial offer.  
International Typewriter Co., 186 W. Lake St., Dept. 511, Chicago, Ill.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

## TOBACCO

**TOBACCO HABIT BANISHED. NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM, no matter how strong your craving, no matter in what form you use tobacco, there is help for you. Just send postcard or letter for our Free Book. It explains everything. NEWELL PHARMACAL CO., Dept. 812, Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.**

**Tobacco Habit Cured or No Pay. Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Guaranteed. Harmless. Used by over 600,000 people. Full treatment sent on trial. Costs \$1.50 if it cures; nothing if it fails. Superba Co., N14, Baltimore, Md.**

## PATENT ATTORNEYS

**PATENTS PROCURED: Trade Marks Registered**—A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. **IRVING L. MCCATHRAN, 703-D International Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 41-J Park Row, New York.**

**PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND ADVICE. WATSON E. COLEMAN, REGISTERED PATENT LAWYER, 724 NINTH STREET, WASHINGTON, D. C.**

**INVENTORS—WRITE FOR OUR GUIDE BOOK, "How to Get Your Patent," and evidence of invention blank. Send model or sketch for inspection and instructions free. Terms reasonable. RANDOLPH & CO., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.**

**PATENTS—Write for our free Guide Book, "How to Obtain A Patent" and Record of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description of invention for inspection and Advice Free. Reasonable Terms. Prompt Service. Highest References. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.**

## PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

**INVENTORS: WE HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS 30 YEARS. IF YOUR INVENTION OR PATENT HAS MERIT. SEND DETAILS OR MODEL. OR WRITE. ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249 ENRIGHT, ST. LOUIS, MO.**



IMPROVE TONE AND VOLUME OF OLD SETS

MODERNIZE OLD SETS WITH ONE DIAL CONTROL

REDUCE STATIC BY MARVELOUS NEW METHOD

RADIO-FY & ELECTRIFY PHONOGRAPHS

# 5 Easy Ways to Make \$3.00 an hour in Your Spare Time in RADIO

Each of these plans, developed by the Radio Association of America, is a big money-maker. Set owners everywhere want to get rid of static, to have their sets operate from the electric light socket, the tone improved, and the volume increased, and transformed into single-dial controls. Phonograph owners want their machines electrified and radiofied. If you learn to render these services, you can easily make \$3.00 an hour for your spare time, to say nothing of the money you can make installing, servicing, repairing, building radio sets, and selling supplies.

Over \$600,000,000 is being spent yearly for sets, supplies, service. You can get your share of this business and, at the same time, fit yourself for the big-pay opportunities in Radio by joining the Association.

## Join the Radio Association of America

A membership in the Association offers you the easiest way into Radio. It will enable you to earn \$3.00 an hour upwards in your spare time—train you to install, repair and build all kinds of sets—start you in business without capital or finance an invention—train you for the \$3,000 to \$10,000 big-pay radio positions—help secure a better position at bigger pay for you. A

membership need not cost you a cent

The Association will give you a comprehensive, practical, and theoretical training and the benefit of its Employment Service. You earn while you learn. Our cooperative plan will make it possible for you to establish a radio store. You have the privilege of buying radio supplies at wholesale from the very first.

## ACT NOW—If You Wish the No-Cost Membership Plan

To a limited number of ambitious men, we will give Special Memberships that may not—need not—cost you a cent. To secure one, write today. We will send you details and also our handbook filled with dollars-and-cents radio ideas. It will open your eyes to the money-making possibilities of Radio.

**Radio Association of America, Inc.**  
4513 Ravenswood Ave., Dept. MSC-5, Chicago, Ill.

**Earned \$500 in Spare Time**  
Frank J. Deutsch, Penn.: "I have made over \$500 out of Radio in my spare time."

**Radio Engineer in One Year**  
Claude DeGrave, Canada: "I knew nothing about Radio when I joined a year ago. I am now a member of a very exclusive organization of Radio Engineers, and my income is 225% greater than it was."

**Doubles Income in 6 Months**  
W. E. Thon, Chicago: "Six months after I enrolled I secured the management of large Radio store and doubled my income."

### Radio Association of America, Inc.

Dept. MSC-5, 4513 Ravenswood Ave., Chicago

Gentlemen: Please send me by return mail full details of your Special Membership Plan, and also copy of your Radio Handbook.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_



## The happy ending...

Did you win or lose the game? Well, it is history now, and be the score what it may, there is a happy ending. The grand finale to every session of sport is a warm, cleansing Ivory bath.

Quickly! Into the tub before your muscles stiffen. Jump in, if possible, while you are still ruddy from the game. Express your glowing mood with a whistle or song . . . but steep your body in absolute laziness until your play-bound muscles run smooth and supple again . . .

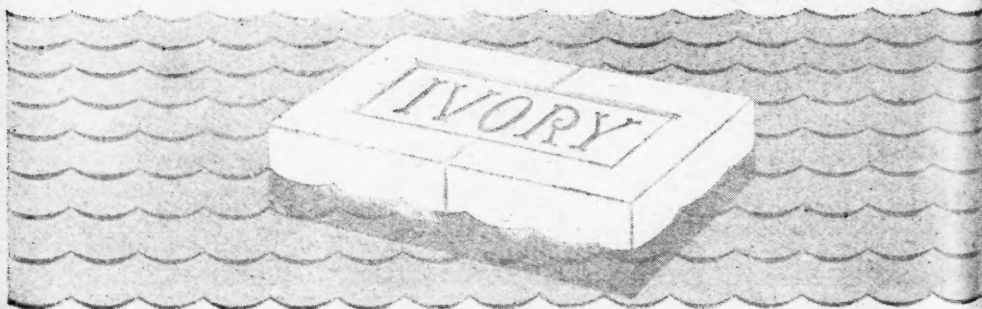
Now—you can stir! And your cake of Ivory Soap comes rollicking over the bathtub waves. Ivory is the buoyant play-

fellow that dares you to try to duck it! The generous floating bath-friend that covers you with thousands of gay, cleansing bubbles.

A tingling shower or spray to finish with. And tomorrow no twinging regrets that you played so hard, because you have taken the right kind of bath today!

Wise sports-lovers know that sun-and-wind-touched skin needs the care of a soap which comforts while it cleanses. So they naturally use Ivory Soap . . . safe for babies, safe for lovely complexions . . . as soothing, refreshing and gentle a soap as money can buy.

. . . kind to everything it touches · 99<sup>44</sup>/<sub>100</sub> % Pure · "It floats"



## Never the same job twice

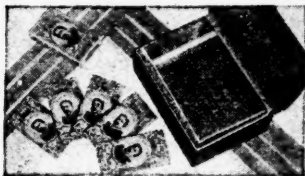
YES, it's the same man shaving on ten different mornings; ten different conditions of water, temperature, and nerves; ten different methods of lathering and stroking.

*{ But his Gillette Blade  
meets all these changing  
conditions with  
the same even temper. }*

So much dependable shaving comfort has been honed and stropped into this blade that eight out of ten American men have learned to expect—and get—a comfortable shave even under the worst possible conditions.

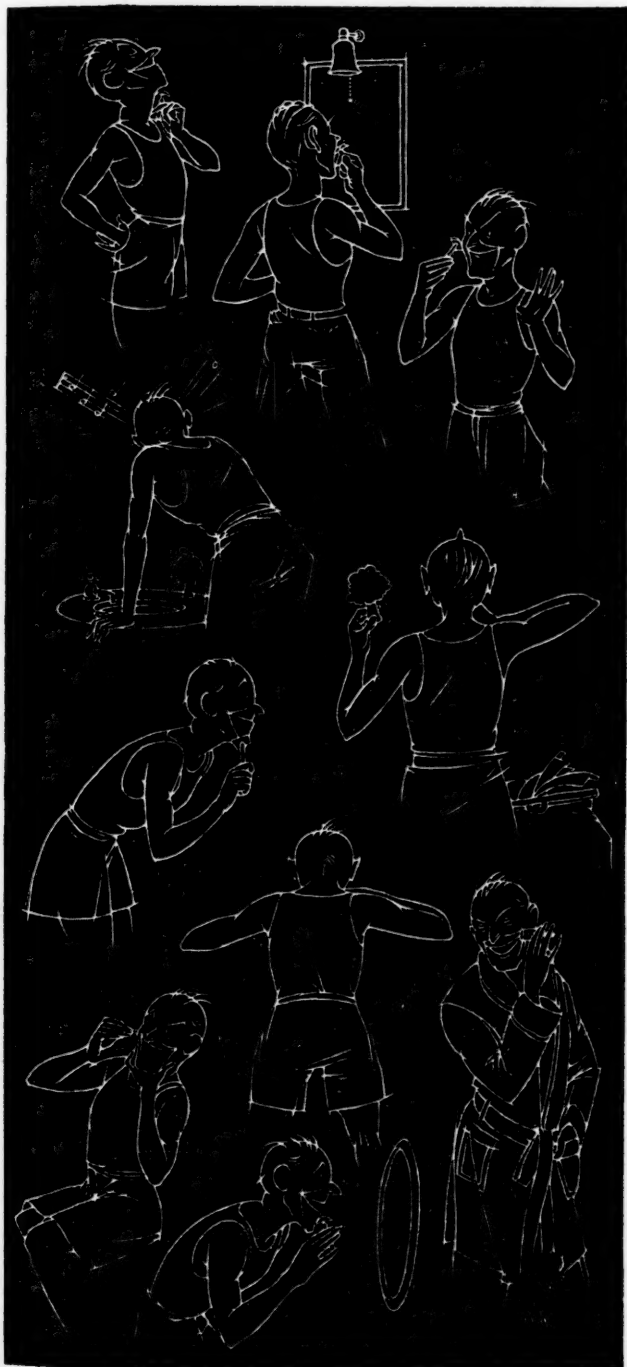
To meet that expectation Gillette has developed and perfected some \$12,000,000 worth of new machines during the past ten years. They condition the Gillette blade far more delicately and precisely than even the most skilful artisan could sharpen a shaving edge.

Conditions vary. But the Gillette Blade is the one *constant* factor in your daily shave. Gillette Safety Razor Co., Boston, U. S. A.

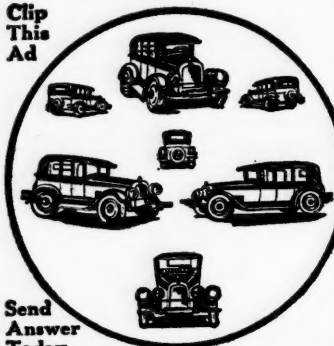


THE NEW FIFTY-BOX—Fifty fresh double-edged Gillette Blades (10 packets of five) in a colorful, useful gift chest. Five dollars at your dealer's.

★ **Gillette** ★



Clip  
This  
Ad



Send  
Answer  
Today

## Win Nash Sedan Or \$2,750.00 in Cash

Someone who answers this ad will receive, absolutely free, a fully equipped 7-Passenger, Advanced Six Nash Sedan, or its full value in cash (\$2,000.00). We are also giving away a Dodge Sedan, a Brunswick Phonograph and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash. This offer is open to anyone living in the U. S. A. outside of Chicago.



### Solve This Puzzle

There are 7 cars in the circle. By drawing 3 straight lines you can put each one in a space by itself. When you do this send me your answer right away.

### \$750.00 Extra for Promptness

In addition to the many valuable prizes and Hundreds of Dollars in Cash, we are also giving a Special Prize of \$750.00 in Cash for Promptness. First prize winner will receive \$2,750.00 in cash, or the Nash Sedan and \$750.00 in cash. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded each one trying. Solve the puzzle right away and send me your answer together with your name and address plainly written. \$4,500.00 in prizes—EVERYBODY REWARDED.  
John T. Adams, Mgr. Dept. 2835 323 S. Peoria St., Chicago, Ill.

**PLUMBING-HEATING**  
Install Your Own  
**New Easy Method**  
Lowest wholesale prices on  
Highest Quality, Grade A  
Goods. Any Handy Man can  
install his own Plumbing and  
Heating BY OUR NEW EASY  
METHOD. Get the best and  
pay only a little each month.

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New bargain catalog just  
issued. With our cut-to-fit  
systems you save waste ma-  
terial and high labor cost.  
50 years of economical service to build-  
ers, home owners, farmers and mechan-  
ics. FREE book gives you the whole  
story. Write for your copy today.  
Million Dollar Bonded Guarantee Protects You

**HARDIN-LAVIN CO.** ESTD 1876  
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## PREPARE FOR AN ART CAREER

—thru the only art school operated  
as a department of a large art organi-  
zation, who have actually produced  
over a quarter million drawings for  
leading advertisers. Commercial ar-  
tists trained the "Meyer Both Way"  
earn as high as \$10,000 per year.  
Home study instruction. Write for  
illustrated book telling of our suc-  
cessful students.

**MEYER BOTH COMPANY**  
Michigan Ave. at 20th St. Dept. 57 Chicago, Ill.



## The ANSONIA

BROADWAY AT 73 STREET. NEW YORK

Patrons of Prominence Choose The Ansonia!

1400 Large Homelike Rooms  
Soundproof Walls

City's Coolest Hotel in the Summer

Rates Will Surely Please

Room with private bath.....from \$3 per day  
For two.....from \$5 per day  
Parlor, bedroom and bath.....from \$6 per day

Booklet on Request  
Wire at our expense for Reservations



...a cooler smoke  
in a drier pipe!



①

CUT FOR  
PIPES ONLY

②

BIG FLAKES  
THAT BURN SLOW

③

AND SMOKE  
COOL

④

SWEET TO THE END  
NO SOGGY HEEL



*Pipe smokers say...*

Granger "acts right" in a pipe . . . smokes slower and cooler, thanks to the shaggy "rough cut". But what keeps winning smokers to Granger is the mild, full-bodied flavor given by the Wellman Method . . . a mellowing secret over fifty years old. Packed in foil instead of tin, hence ten cents.

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

**GRANGER** Rough Cut

IN MORE PIPES EVERY DAY

# Help your Digestion *when it's good!*

**M**ILLIONS have found Beeman's Pepsin Gum a pleasant and wholesome precaution against indigestion. Millions prefer the fresh, keen flavor of Beeman's, its smoothness and fine quality, and the pleasant way it stimulates digestive action after meals. Perfected by Dr. Beeman over 30 years ago, this delicious gum is today the favorite of people who chew gum as an aid to digestion. Help your digestion when it's good—enjoy a stick of Beeman's after meals.



**BEEMAN'S  
PEPSIN  
GUM**  
*aids digestion*

# After over-eating relieve indigestion with this reliable doctor's prescription

**D**ON'T let each hearty meal lead to heartburn, bad breath, acid stomach, the misery of gas and "overfulness."

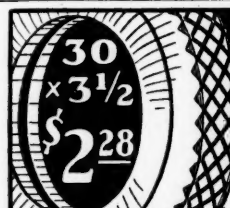
Pepto-Bismol soothes the delicate membranes of the stomach and digestive tract. It is aromatic and pleasant to take. Gentle and mild in action, it is recommended by physicians for children and infants too.

At your druggist's—50¢ in the distinctive triangular bottle. Also at leading soda fountains. The Norwich Pharmacal Co., Norwich, New York.



**Norwich**  
MAKERS OF UNDOING  
*A teaspoonful  
every half hour  
until relieved*

## Pepto-Bismol



**New  
LOWEST  
Prices  
on Standard  
TIRES**

**BIG REDUCTIONS**  
on U. S. Goodrich, Goodrear, Firestone and other tires only slightly used—due to owners changing to balloons. Thousands of satisfied customers report tremendous mileage.

**SEND ONLY \$1.00**  
deposit for each tire wanted—balance C. O. D. State whether clincher or straight axle. No risk in buying from us. If not satisfactory upon delivery, return them to us for refund. ORDER NOW.

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1329 S. Michigan Boulevard  
Dept. 740-G, Chicago

| SIZE                             | TIRES  | TUBES  |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 30x31-2                          | \$2.28 | \$1.00 |
| 31x4                             | 3.00   | 1.15   |
| 32x4                             | 3.00   | 1.15   |
| 33x4                             | 3.00   | 1.15   |
| 32x41-2                          | 3.25   | 1.45   |
| 33x41-2                          | 3.25   | 1.45   |
| 34x41-2                          | 3.50   | 1.45   |
| 30x5                             | 3.65   | 1.75   |
| 33x5                             | 3.65   | 1.75   |
| 28x4.40                          | 2.35   | 1.10   |
| 30x5.25                          | 3.00   | 1.35   |
| 30x5.77                          | 3.25   | 1.40   |
| 31x5.25                          | 3.25   | 1.35   |
| 33x6.00                          | 3.25   | 1.45   |
| 32x6.20                          | 3.25   | 1.45   |
| Other Balloon Size Tires, \$3.00 |        |        |



## Common sense about dandruff *and its treatment*

**L**IKE all germ conditions, dandruff should have immediate attention. The penalty of neglect is an unhealthy scalp, falling hair—even baldness.

The foremost dermatologists say that the best means of checking dandruff is the antiseptic shampoo and massage. The antiseptic, to strike at the germ condition and remove the flakes; the massage, to increase blood circulation and thus aid hair roots to regain vigor.

At the first symptom of dandruff, use full strength Listerine, the safe antiseptic. Simply douse it on the head and massage the scalp backward and forward with the fingers. Repeat the treatment often, using a little castor oil if scalp is

excessively dry. Results often seem miraculous.

This is not surprising, however, when you realize that Listerine, though healing in effect, is powerful against germs—so active, in fact, that it destroys 200,000,000 of the stubborn *Staphylococcus Aureus* (pus) and *Bacillus Typhosus* (typhoid) germs in 15 seconds. At the first sign of dandruff, try this pleasant treatment, you'll be delighted by results. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

# LISTERINE

The Safe and Soothing Antiseptic

## kills 200,000,000 germs in 15 seconds

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**FREE MACHINE  
FOR AGENTS**

**\$90  
WEEKLY IN  
SPARE TIME!**

Men, here is a wonder—the most sensational invention of the age! If you're looking for a rapid fire seller—an item that nets you 100% profit—an item that sells itself to 7 out of 10 men on demonstration—I've got it in Ve-Po-Ad, the amazing new vest pocket adding machine!

**Sells for \$2.95—You Make \$1.65**

This most remarkable invention does all the work of a \$300 adding machine, yet fits the vest pocket and sells for only \$2.95! It sells on sight to storekeepers, business men, and everyone who uses figures—and makes you over 100% profit on every sale! Ve-Po-Ad does any kind of figuring in a jiffy, yet weighs but 4 oz. Counts up to a billion. Shows total visible at all times. Perfectly accurate, lightning fast. Never makes a mistake or gets out of order. Over 100,000 in daily use!

**Get Your Machine FREE**

Live wire salesmen are dropping everything else and flocking to Ve-Po-Ad. Ve-Po-Ad brings them quick money and lots of it. Shapiro out in California made \$475 in one week! You can "clean up" too! Only 10 sales a day in spare time will bring YOU over \$95.00 a week! You need no previous sales experience—Ve-Po-Ad sells itself! If you are really interested in earning a steady, substantial income, write at once for full details of my **MONEY-MAKING PLAN** and **FREE VE-PO-AD** given to new Agents. Do it NOW—TODAY!

**C. M. CLEARY, Dept. 905**

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Vaudeville Theatres.

N. Y. Institute of Photography, 10 W. 33rd Street, New York, Dept. 80

## Play for Money It's Fun!

**PLAY** in a dance orchestra! It's the most enjoyable way to make extra money—\$10 to \$50 weekly in spare time. Meet new people. Make new friends. Be the welcome guest at every party.

You can do it with the **OCTOFONE**—Eight Instruments in One. Can be tuned and played like a "uke", tenor banjo, tenor guitar, mandolin, mandola, mando-cello, tippie or taro-patch.

Easy for Beginners—Free Instruction Book shows you.

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**\$15.00**

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## How I Lost 97 Pounds



Before  
279 lbs.

**I weighed 279 lbs!**

After trying many ways to reduce, a leading insurance medical advisor told me of a natural, pleasant, healthful way. No thyroid or dangerous drugs. It was easy, natural and absolutely safe.

I feel better, look better, have more energy and vitality. No wrinkled or flabby skin.

Send name and address for full particulars **FREE**, without obligation.



Today  
182 lbs.

**M. E. HART**

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## 30 Days Free Trial on all MEAD Bicycles

New Models now ready for delivery direct from our factory. Astonishing new prices and terms. Do not buy until you get them.

**RIDER AGENTS WANTED** to ride and exhibit sample. Save big money. Many models, styles.

**Tires** wheels, lamps, horns, equipment at half usual prices. Send no money.

**Write for our marvelous prices and terms.**

**Mead CYCLE COMPANY**

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Write us today for free catalog





## Welcome to New York and the Alamar

**BROADWAY & 71st ST.**

Telephone, Endicott 5000

A Masterpiece of Modern Hotel  
Creation, Offering Every Conven-  
ience. Six Hundred spacious  
rooms each with Bath, Shower and  
Servidor. For exceptional dining  
The Blue Room and Bonbonniere.

**TARIFF MODERATE  
UNDER KNOTT MANAGEMENT**

Wire at **OUR** expense  
for reservations.



**SALE \$23530x3 1/2**

**Low Prices—High Grade**  
**We guarantee 3 Months Service**  
 These standard Goodyear, Fisk, Firestone, U. S. and other slightly used tires treaded by our process give big mileage. Our customers reorder year after year.

**Try Us! Order Now!**

| Size     | Tire   | Tube   | Size    | Tire   | Tube   |
|----------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| 30x3     | \$2.35 | \$1.15 | 34x4-12 | \$3.35 | \$2.25 |
| 30x3 1/2 | 2.35   | 1.25   | 30x6    | 4.25   | 2.35   |
| 32x3 1/2 | 2.65   | 1.35   | 33x5    | 4.25   | 2.50   |
| 31x4     | 3.50   | 1.65   | 30x5    | 4.25   | 2.65   |
| 32x4     | 3.50   | 1.70   | 29x4 40 | 2.65   | 1.40   |
| 33x4     | 3.50   | 1.75   | 30x5 15 | 3.95   | 2.40   |
| 34x4     | 3.50   | 1.80   | 31x5 25 | 4.25   | 2.50   |
| 32x4 1/2 | 3.95   | 2.15   | 30x5 77 | 4.25   | 2.65   |
| 32x4 1/2 | 3.95   | 2.20   | 33x5 00 | 4.25   | 2.65   |

Send only \$1 deposit on each tire to defray charges, balance C. O. D. 8 months guarantee or replaced at 1/2 regular price. 5 per cent off cash with order. Dealers Wanted.

**JEAN TIRE CO., Dept. 434**  
 Ogden Park Station, Chicago, Ill.

**Forget Aerial Troubles**

**Subwave Aerial** GET NEW SELECTIVITY DISTANCE BETTER TONE

Why put up with electro-static noise and interference, fading and other roof-aerial nuisances when you can easily avoid them with the amazing underground antenna—Subwave-Aerial? Tests on all types of receivers show marked improvement in tone, selectivity and clarity on local and DX stations. Reduces interference.

**TEST SUBWAVE-AERIAL FREE**  
 Write for details and free trial offer to Dept. 740 G. W.

**Reduces UNDERGROUND STATIC AERIAL PRODUCTS**  
 SUITE 618, ST. CLAIR BLDG.  
 ST. CLAIR & ERIE STS., CHICAGO, ILL.

APPROVED & ENDORSED BY LICENSED RADIO OPERATORS AND ENGINEERS

**BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR!**

**EARN UP TO \$250 per mo.**

**MEN ARE WANTED**  
 and they get as high as \$250 per month salary. We'll train you—and upon completion of your training—assist you to a position paying at least \$120 per month salary plus expenses, or refund your tuition. It only takes about 3 months of spare time home study and you're ready to step into a profitable position with rapid salary advances to \$175 and up. It's healthful outdoor work with regular hours—away from dingy shops and monotonous desks. Write today for free booklet and contract showing how we assist you to a position after graduation or refund your tuition.

**Standard Business Training Institute**  
 Div. 56 Buffalo, New York

## Stop Using a Truss

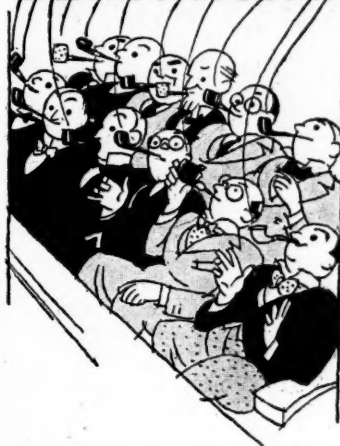
**STUARTS' ADHESIF PLAPAO-PADS** are entirely different from the truss—being mechanico-chemico applicators—made self-adhesive purposely to keep the muscle-tonic "PLAPAO" applied continuously to the affected parts, and to minimize painful friction and dangerous slipping. **No straps, buckles or spring attached. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive.** For almost a quarter of a century satisfied thousands report success. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. No delay from work. Process of recovery natural, so no subsequent use for a truss. Awarded Gold Medal, Grand Prix, etc. Trial of "PLAPAO" will be sent to you absolutely **FREE**. Write your name on coupon and send TODAY.

**PLAPAO CO., 802 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.**

Awarded Gold Medal Awarded Grand Prix

Name.....  
 Address.....  
 Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.

## Pipe jurors Attention!



**I**F you want to give your favorite pipes a fair trial, start them all at scratch with Sir Walter Raleigh's favorite smoking mixture. It's milder than most, it's rich and mellow, and its fragrance is kept fresh by the heavy gold foil that lines the tin. Let Sir Walter show you how good your pipe can be.

**LIMITED OFFER** (for the United States only)  
 If your favorite tobacconist does not carry Sir Walter Raleigh, send us his name and address. In return for this courtesy, we'll be delighted to send you without charge a full-size tin of this *milder* pipe mixture.  
 Dept. 73, Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation, Louisville, Kentucky



# SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Who discovered how good a pipe can be

It's



milder

# NO NEED TO HAVE GRAY HAIR



## TRY AT OUR RISK

*This Marvelous New Discovery That Restores Youthful Color to Gray Hair!*

**Amazing new discovery—REVA—restores hair to a youthful natural color.**

No need to fuss with messy dyes. REVA is a clean, colorless liquid. Same bottle used for all colors. No samples of hair are needed. Applied to hair roots. Anyone can apply easily at home without skill or outside aid. Restores so naturally your friends cannot notice change. Does not streak or crack hair. Will not wash off or fade. Hair keeps uniform color. Does not gray at roots. REVA also acts as a hair tonic. Helps check dandruff. Thousands have used it successfully. Satisfactory results guaranteed. Try full-sized bottle AT OUR RISK.

Write for particulars and Free Book on "Gray Hair."

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Learn in a few months to make plates, crowns, bridges, etc., for dentists. No books. Day or night schools in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, Philadelphia. Write for Free Book. **McGARRIE SCHOOL OF MECHANICAL DENTISTRY** 1338 S. Michigan Avenue Dept. 274 Chicago, Illinois

When you start a serial in the Argosy-Allstory you only wait a week to go on with it. Start one this week, and you'll buy every number until it's concluded.

## Play the Hawaiian Guitar like the Hawaiians!

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

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After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge needed.

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Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

**GIVEN**—when you enroll—a sweet toned

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**WRITE AT ONCE for attractive offer and easy terms. You have everything to gain. A postcard will do. ACT!**

**OTHER COURSES** Tenor Banjo, Violin, Tiple, Tenor Guitar, Ukulele, Banjo Ukulele. Under well known instructors.

**FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC, Inc.** 5th Floor, Woolworth Bldg. Dept. 235, New York, N. Y.

Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York—Member National Home Study Council

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**BARGAIN! THIS MONTH**

SPECIAL OFFER **5 YARDS FREE** **\$1.95**

Gingham, Percales, Prints, Voiles, Chambrays, Shirtings, Crepes, etc. New clean goods direct to you at a big saving. Latest Assorted Colors. 4 yards of each or more. The very newest, latest patterns for dresses. Our finest quality.

**SEND NO MONEY.** Pay postman cents delivery charge. \$1.95 plus a few cents 35c postage paid, money with order. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back.

**EASTERN TEXTILE COMPANY**  
236 W. 55th St., Dept. J-499, N.Y.C.

## Puts New Soles On Shoes for 9c

A simple, amazing product has been invented by C. H. Geppert, Suite 1004-E, Second and Walnut Sts., Des Moines, Iowa, which makes new soles on shoes cost only 9c a shoe. Saves cost of new shoes. Reconditions old shoes. Spreads on with a knife like butter, wears like leather, and equally pliable, waterproof and can be applied by anyone instantly. Mr. Geppert wants agents and is willing to send a no-cost sample. Write him today. © 1929.

## I Offer You \$8 a Day ~and a



Write quick for new proposition. We offer \$8.00 a day and a new Chevrolet Coach, for demonstrating and taking orders for Comer All-Weather Topcoats and Radiators. Spare time. No experience required. Sample outfit free. Write now.

Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. 491-L, Dayton, Ohio

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SCIENCE now knows that the tiny prostate gland frequently causes lost health and strength, night rising, constipation, pains in the back, legs, feet, etc., in men past 40. Unless corrected this may lead to miserable old age and grave surgery. Now an amazing drugless treatment is giving swift, permanent relief to thousands. Used and endorsed by physicians, hospitals and sanitariums. Sent on trial. Feel 10 years younger in 6 days or pay nothing. Write for offer and free book of daring facts about men past 40.

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—EVERY DEAF PERSON KNOWS THAT



I make myself hear, after being deaf for 25 years, with these Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They stop head noises and ringing ears. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I got deaf and how I make you hear. Address



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New Miraculous Fluid—not a paint—not a polish—not a varnish—not a wax. Flows on; dries quickly. Instantly restores original color and luster. Agents and operators for Service Stations wanted.

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Mail at once your free catalog about how to make big profits in the Crispette business with little capital.



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There is one near you. You will recognize it by this sign. Liggett's are also Rexall Stores.



Stir a teaspoonful of Rexall Laxative Salt in a morning glass of water. Pleasant, refreshing, effervescent. Fine for sick headache, biliousness, indigestion. Keeps bowels regular and the system fit. Rexall Laxative Salt is sold only at Rexall Stores. Save with safety at your

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SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES ARE PAID on publisher's acceptance. Write for Free Booklet on developing ideas for song words or music required by Talking Pictures.

NEWCOMER ASSOCIATES, 1674 B'way, N. Y.

## STOP PILES

*This modern, safe way*

Itching, bleeding, torturing piles yield quickly to UNGUENTINE RECTAL CONES, which soothe the pain at once. Many say they are completely cured without an operation. At all druggists—75c. Write for FREE trial. In stubborn cases doctors also recommend NOROL-AGAR. It is a harmless lubricant, so gentle it is widely used for children. The Norwich Pharmacal Co., Dept. AEs, Norwich, N. Y.

# IVER JOHNSON

*"Gee!*

*Dad went the limit  
and got me the  
Best There Is"*



*America's  
Finest  
Bicycle*

Boys who ride America's Finest Bicycle know exactly why it's "the best there is."

The MOBICYCLE \$45  
without extra equipment

The SUPER MOBIKE \$50  
completely equipped with the latest and best of everything, and other models fully described in our catalog in colors.

Prices range from \$32.50 to \$67.50

IVER JOHNSON VELOCIPEDES  
and JUNIORCYCLES  
(Sidewalk Cycles)

are the same high grade as our bicycles.

Any Iver Johnson Agency will show you these famous products.

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IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS & CYCLE WORKS  
63 RIVER STREET, FITCHBURG, MASS.

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JUNIORCYCLE

VELOCIPED



**SUPPOSE** you meet with an accident or sickness tonight—will your income continue?

Remember, few escape without accident—and none of us can tell what tomorrow holds for us. While you are reading this warning, somewhere some ghastly tragedy, flood or fire, some automobile or train disaster is taking its toll of human life or limb. **NOW IS THE TIME TO PROTECT YOURSELF.**

If you suddenly become ill—would your income stop? What if you suffered from lobar pneumonia, an appendicitis operation, or many of the other common ills, which are covered in this unusual policy; wouldn't you rest easier and convalesce more quickly if you knew that our company stood ready to help lift from your shoulders, the distressing financial burdens in case of a personal tragedy? **PROTECT YOURSELF NOW!**

**Largest and Oldest Exclusive Health and Accident Insurance Company in America.**

**Under Direct Supervision of 48 State Insurance Departments**

**ESTABLISHED OVER 42 YEARS**

**MAIL COUPON TODAY**

**North American Accident Insurance Co. [of Chicago]  
297 Bonnell Building, Newark, New Jersey.**

GENTLEMEN: At no cost to me send details of New \$10,000 Premium \$10 Policy.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

**CASH**  
When YOU need it most  
**A \$10 Bill**  
Protects YOU and Your FAMILY against  
**SICKNESS and ACCIDENTS**  
**FOR A WHOLE YEAR**

**Mail the Coupon Today!**

Mail the Coupon before it's too late to protect yourself against the chances of fate picking you out as its next victim.



**NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION  
\$10 A Year Entire Cost.  
No Dues. No Assessments.**

**MEN AND WOMEN**

**16 to 70 Years Accepted**

**\$10,000**

**Principal Sum.**

**\$10,000**

**Loss of hands, feet or eyesight.**

**\$25 Weekly Benefits**

**for stated Accidents or Sicknesses**

Doctor's Bills, Hospital Benefit, Emergency Benefit and other liberal features to help in time of need—all clearly shown in policy.

This is a simple and understandable policy—without complicated or misleading clauses. You know exactly what every word means—and every word means exactly what it says.

**AGENTS wanted for New Territories**





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# Have you entered the Eastman \$30,000 PRIZE CONTEST?

One of the 1,223  
cash awards can easily be yours

PROBABLY you have already heard of this big event for amateur picture-takers. But have you made any pictures for it yet?

If you have said to yourself, "What's the use of entering? I can't win. I'm no expert with the camera," you're making a big mistake. The winners in this contest are going to be men and women just like yourself, people who, if you asked them, would say they had little or no photographic ability.

Technical skill is a minor factor in this contest. What the judges are looking for are *interesting* pictures—pictures of children and scenes, sports and animals, still life and nature studies, buildings and architectural details, interiors and unusual photographs.

If you live under the flag of the United States or that of the Dominion of Canada, you're eligible to enter and compete—except, of course, if you or some member of your family is connected with the photographic business. And practically any snapshot or time exposure that you may take during March, April or May, this year, is eligible also, provided it is received by us on or before May 31. There are enough classifications to cover



*Kodak Film in the familiar yellow box is dependably uniform. Reduces the danger of under- or over-exposure. It gets the picture.*

all kinds. When we receive your entries we'll place them in the classes where they'll have the best chance of winning.

Any brand of camera or film may be used, but negatives must not be larger than  $3\frac{3}{4}$  x  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches and prints not larger than 7 inches in width or length.

Enter this contest without losing another day! Increase your chance of winning by beginning to take pictures *at once!* There is no limit to the number you are permitted to submit. The more you enter, the more likely you are to capture one of the big cash prizes. Clip or copy the entry blank below and *get your camera out today.* This may prove to be the most profitable advertisement you ever read.

## PRIZES

Grand Prize of \$2,500.00

11 prizes of \$500.00 each 11 prizes of \$250.00 each

125 prizes of 100.00 each 275 prizes of 10.00 each

800 prizes of \$5.00 each

Totals, 1,223 \$30,000.00

In the event of a tie, the advertised award will be paid to each of the tying contestants. (57 of the above \$100 prizes were sent to winners April 1. 57 more will be sent May 1. That leaves 1,109 prizes for you to aim at.)

**Only pictures made during March, April and May, 1929, are eligible**

## PRIZE CONTEST ENTRY BLANK

Name.....  
(Please Print)

Street Address ..... Town and State.....

Make of Camera..... Make of Film.....

Enclose this blank or a copy with your entries and mail to Prize Contest Office, Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y. Do not place your name on either the front or the back of any picture.

For a program of delightful entertainment, tune in on Kodak Hour each Friday at 10 P. M., New York time, over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

While this page tells you practically everything you need to know to enter the contest, further details, including the rules for the Special Enlargement Award, may be secured from your dealer or from the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y.



"This  
marvelous  
cigarette"

*Yvonne D'Arle*

Yvonne D'Arle  
Delightful Star of  
"The  
Three Musketeers"

For a slender figure—  
"Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet"

**"It's toasted"** No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

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